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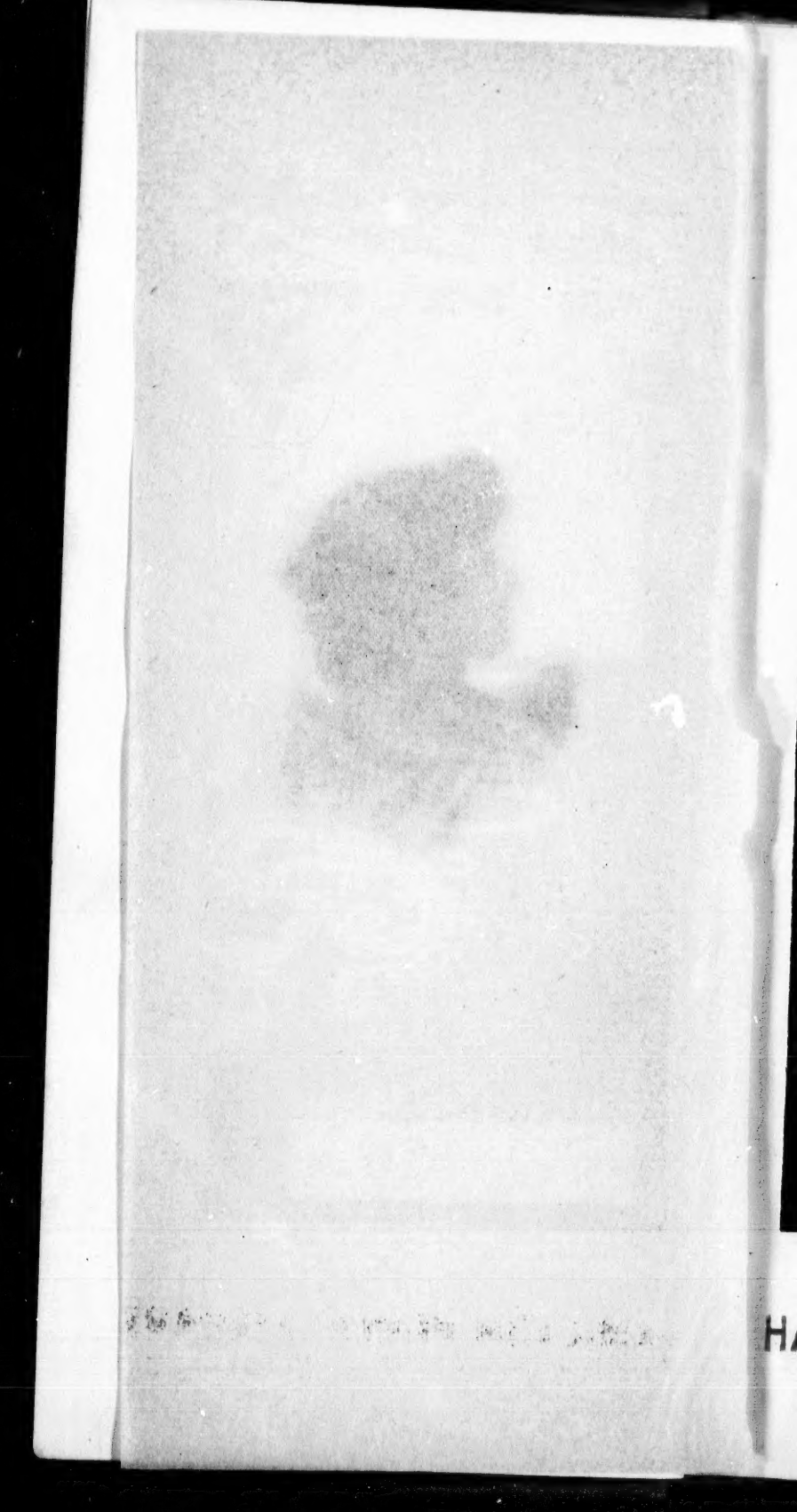

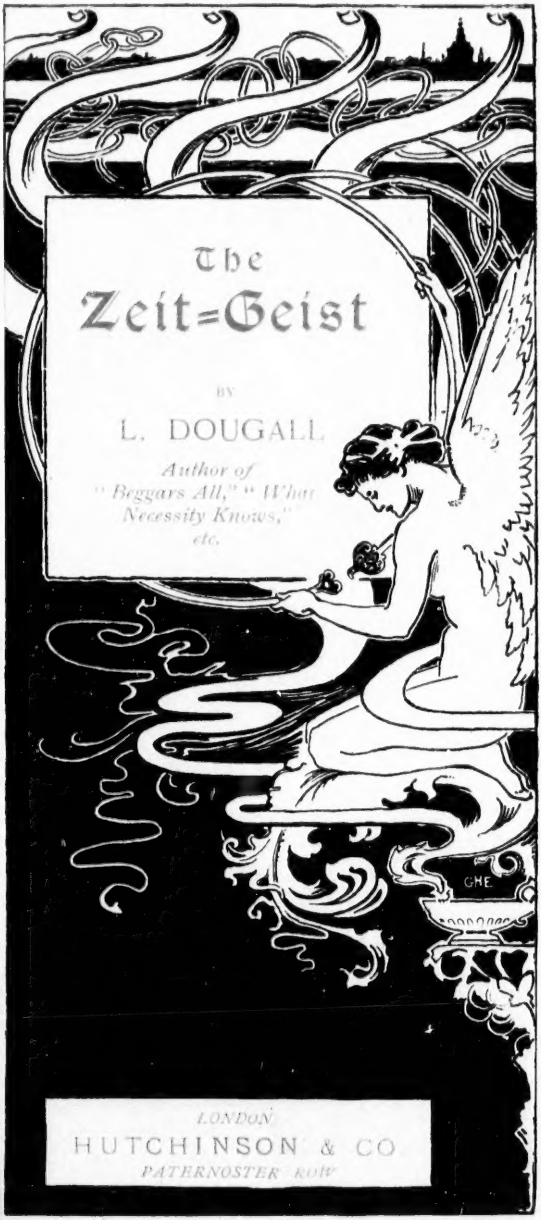

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"I . . . create evil. I am the Lord."

Isa. xlv. 6, 7.

"Where will God be absent? In His face
Is light, but in His shadow there is healing too:
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed!"

The Ring and the Book.

"If Nature is the garment of God, it is woven without seam throughout."

The Ascent of Man.

RARY.

OXFORD, *January* 1895.

WHEN travelling in Canada, in the region north of Lake Ontario, I came upon traces of the somewhat remarkable life which is the subject of the following sketch.

Having applied to the schoolmaster in the town where Bartholomew Toyner lived, I received an account the graphic detail and imaginative insight of which attest the writer's personal affection. This account, with only such condensation as is necessary, I now give to the world. I do not believe that it belongs to the novel to teach theology; but I do believe that religious sentiments and opinions are a legitimate subject of its art, and that perhaps its highest function is to promote understanding by bringing into contact minds that habitually misinterpret one another.

THE ZEIT-GEIST.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

To-day I am at home in the little town of the fens, where the Ahwewee River falls some thirty feet from one level of land to another. Both broad levels were covered with forest of ash and maple, spruce and tamarack; but long ago, some time in the thirties, impious hands built dams on the impetuous Ahwewee, and wide marshes and drowned woodlands are the result. Yet just immediately at Fentown there is neither marsh nor dead tree; the river dashes over its ledge of rock in a foaming flood, runs shallow and rapid be-

tween green woods, and all about the town there are breezy pastures where the stumps are still standing, and arable lands well cleared. The little town itself has a thriving look. Its public buildings and its villas have risen, as by the sweep of an enchanter's wand, in these backwoods to the south of the Ottawa valley.

There was a day when I came a stranger to Fentown. The occasion of my coming was a meeting concerning the opening of new schools for the town—schools on a large and ambitious plan for so small a place. When the meeting was over, I came out into the street on a mild September afternoon. The other members of the School Council were with me. There were two clergymen of the party. One of them, a young man with thin, eager face, happened to be at my side.

"This Mr. Toyner, whose opinion has been so much con-

sulted, was not here to-day ?" I said this interrogatively.

"No, ah—but you'll see him now. He has invited you all to a garden party, or something of that sort. He's in delicate health. Ah—of course, you know, it is natural for me to wish his influence with the Council were much less than it is."

"Indeed! He was spoken of as a philanthropist."

"It's a very poor love to one's fellow-man that gives him all that his vanity desires in the way of knowledge without leading him into the Church, where he would be taught to set the value of everything in its right proportion."

I was rather struck with this view of the function of the Church. "Certainly," I replied, "to see all things in right proportion is wisdom; but I heard this Toyner mentioned as a religious man."

"He has some imaginations

of his own, I believe, which he mistakes for religion. I do not know him intimately; I do not wish to. I believe he has some sort of desire to do what is right; but that, you know, is a house built upon the sand, unless it is founded upon the desire for instruction as to what *is* right. Every one cries up his generosity; for instance, one of my churchwardens tells him that we need a new organ in the church and the people won't give a penny-piece towards it, so Toyner says, with his benevolent smile, 'They must be taught to give. Tell them I will give half if they will give the other half.' But if the Roman Catholic priest or a Methodist goes to him the next day for a subscription, he gives just as willingly if, as is likely, he thinks the object good. What can you do with a man like that, who has no principle? It's impossible to have much respect for him."

Now I myself am a schoolmaster, versed in the lore of certain books ancient and modern, but knowing very little about such a practical matter as applied theology; nor did I know very much then concerning the classification of Christians among themselves: but I think that I am not wrong in saying that this young man belonged to that movement in the Anglican Church which fights strongly for a visible unity and for Church tradition. I am so made that I always tend to agree with the man who is speaking, so my companion was encouraged by my sympathy.

He went on: "I can do with a man that is out-and-out anything. I can work with a Papist; I can work with a Methodist, as far as I can conscientiously meet him on common ground, and I can respect him if he conscientiously holds that he is right and I am

wrong: but these fellows that are neither one thing nor the other—they are as dangerous as rocks and shoals that are just hidden under the water. You never know when you have them."

We were upon the broad wooden side-walk of an avenue leading from the central street of the town to a region of outstanding gardens and pleasure-grounds, in which the wooden villas of the citizens stood among luxuriant trees. It is a characteristic of Fentown that the old trees about the place have been left standing.

A new companion came to my side, and he, as fate would have it, was another clergyman. He was an older man, with a genial, bearded face. I think he belonged to that party which takes its name from the Evangel of whose purity it professes itself the guardian.

"You are going to this

entertainment which Mr. and Mrs. Toyner are giving?" The cordiality of his commonplace remark had a certain restraint in it.

"You are going also?"

"No; it is not a house at which I visit. I have lived here for twenty-five years, and of course I have known Mr. Toyner more or less all that time. I do not know how I shall be able to work on the same Council with him; but we shall see. We, who believe in the truth of religion, must hold our own if we can."

I was to be the master of the new schools. I pleased him with my assent.

"I am rather sorry," he continued, "to tell the truth, that you should begin your social life in Fentown by visiting Mr. Toyner; but of course this afternoon it is merely a public reception, and after a time you will be able to judge for yourself. I do not

hesitate to say that I consider his influence, especially with the young people, of a most dangerous kind. For a long time, you know, he and his wife were quite ostracised—not so much because of their low origin as because of their religious opinions. But of late years even good Christians appear disposed to be friendly with them. Money, you know—money carries all things before it."

"Yes, that is too often the case."

"Well, I don't say that Toyner doesn't hold up a certain standard of morality among the young men of the place, but it's a pretty low one; and he has them all under his influence. There isn't a young fellow that walks these streets, whether the son of clergyman or beggar, who is not free to go to that man's house every evening and have the run of his rooms and his books. And Toyner and

his wife will sit down and play cards with them; or they'll get in a lot of girls, and have a dance, or theatricals,—the thin end of the wedge, you know, the thin end of the wedge! And all the young men go to his house, except a few that we've got in our Christian Association."

The speaker was stricter in his views than I saw cause to be; but then, I knew something of his life; he was giving it day by day to save the men of whom he was talking. He had a better right than I to know what was best for them.

"When you have a thorough-going man of the world," he said, "every one knows what that means, and there's not so much harm done. But this Mr. Toyner is always talking about God, and using his influence to make people pray to God. Such men are not ready to pray until they are prepared to give up the world!

The God that he tells them of is a fiction of his imagination; indeed, I might say a mere creature of his fancy, who is going to save all men in the end, whatever they do!"

"A Universalist!"

"Oh, worse than that—at least, I have read the books of Universalists who, though their error was great, did not appear to me so far astray. I cannot understand it! I cannot understand it!" he went on; "I cannot understand the influence that he has obtained over our more educated class; for twenty years ago he was himself a low, besotted drunkard, and his wife is the daughter of a murderer! Still less do I understand how such people can claim to be religious at all, and yet not see to what awful evil the small beginnings of vice must lead. I tell you, if a man is allowed by Providence to lead an easy life, and remains unfaithful, he may still have some good metal

in him which adversity might refine; but when people have gone through all that Toyner and his wife have been through —not a child that has been born to them but has died at the breast—I say, when they have been through all that, and still lead a worldly, unsatisfactory life, you may be sure that there is nothing in them that has the true ring of manhood or womanhood."

I was left alone to enter Mr. Toyner's gates. I found myself in a large pleasure-ground, where Nature had been guided, not curtailed, in her work. I was walking upon a winding drive, walled on either side by a wild irregular line of shrubs, where the delicate forms of acacias and crab-apples lifted themselves high in comparison to the lower lilac and elderberry-bushes. I watched the sunlit acacias as they fluttered, spreading their delicate leaves and golden pods against the blue

above me. I made my way leisurely in the direction of music which I heard at some distance. I had not advanced far before another person came into my path.

He was a slight, delicate man of middle size. His hair and moustache were almost quite white. Something in the air of neatness and perfection about his dress, in the extreme gravity and clearness of his grey eyes, even in the fine texture of that long, thin, drooping moustache, made it evident to me that this new companion was not what we call an ordinary person.

"Your friend did not come in with you." The voice spoke disappointment; the speaker looked wistfully at the form of the retreating clergyman which he could just see through a gap in the shrubs.

"You wished him to come?"

"I saw you coming. I came toward the gate in the

hope that he might come in." Then he added a word of cordial greeting. I perceived that I was walking with my host.

There are some men to whom one instinctively pays the compliment of direct speech. "I have been walking with two clergymen. I understand that you differ from both with regard to religious opinion."

It appeared to me that after this speech of mine he took my measure quietly. He did not say in so many words that he did not see that this difference of opinion was a sufficient reason for their absence, but by some word or sign he gave me to understand that, adding:

"I feel myself deprived of a great benefit in being without their society. They are the two best and noblest men I know."

"It is rare for men to take pleasure in the society of their opponents."

"Yet you will admit that to be willing to learn from those from whom we differ is the only path to wisdom."

"It is difficult to tread that path without letting go what we already have, and that produces chaos."

With intensity both of thought and feeling he took up the words that I had dropped half idly, and showed me what he thought to be the truth and untruth of them. There was a grave earnestness in his speech which made his opinion on this subject suddenly become of moment to me, and his intensity did not produce any of that sensation of irritation or opposition which the intensity of most men produces as soon as it is felt.

"You think that the chief obstacle which is hindering the progress of true religion in the world at present is that while we will not learn from those who disagree with us

we can obtain no new light, and that when we are willing to reach after their light we become also willing to let go what we have had, so that the world does not gain but loses by the transaction. This is, I admit, an obstacle to thought; but it is not the essential difficulty of our age."

"Let us consider," I said, in my pedantic way, "how my difficulty may be overcome, and then let us discuss that one you consider to be essential."

Toyner's choice of words, like his appearance, betrayed a strong, yet finely chiselled personality.

"We are truly accustomed now to the idea that whatever has life cannot possibly remain unchanged, but must always develop by leaving some part behind and producing some part that is new. It is God's will that the religious thought of the world, which is made up of

the thought of individuals, shall proceed in this way, whether we will or not, but it must always help progress when we can make our wills at one with God's in this matter; we go faster and safer so. Now to say that to submit willingly to God's law of growth is to produce chaos must certainly be a fallacy. It must then be a fallacy to argue that to keep a mind open to all influences is antagonistic to the truest religious life; we cannot—whether we wish or not, we *cannot*—let go any truth that has been assimilated into our lives; and what truth we have not assimilated it is no advantage to hold without agitation. We know better where we are when we are forced to sift it. It is the very great apparent advantage of recognised order that deceives us! When we lose that *apparent* advantage, when we lose, too, the familiar names and symbols,

and think, like children, that we have lost the reality they have expressed to us, a very low state of things *appears* to result. The strain and stress of life become much greater. Ah! but, my friend, it is that strain and stress that shape us into the image of God."

"You hinted, I think, that to your mind there was a more real obstacle, one peculiar to our age."

Ever since I first met him I have been puzzled to know how it was that I often knew so nearly what Toyner meant when he only partially expressed his thought; he had this power over my understanding. He was my master from the first.

He laid his hand now slightly upon my arm, as though to emphasise what he said.

"It is a little hard to explain it reverently," he said, "and still harder to understand why the difficulty should have come about, but in our day it would

seem that the nights of prayer and the fresh intuition into the laws of God's working, which we see united in the life of our great Example, have become divorced. It is their union again that we must have—that we shall have; but at present there is the difficulty for every man of us—the men who lead us in either path are different men and lead different ways. Our lawgivers are not the men who meet God upon the mount. Our scientists are not the teachers who are pre-eminent for fasting and prayer. We who to be true to ourselves must follow in both paths find our souls perplexed."

In front of us, as we turned a curve in the drive, a bed of scarlet lilies stood stately in the sun, and a pair of bickering sparrows rose from the fountain near which they grew. Toyner made a slight gesture of his hand. With the eagerness of a child he asked:

"Is it not hard to believe that we may ask and expect forgiveness and gifts from the God who by slow inevitable laws of growth clothes the lilies, who ordains the fall of every one of these sparrows, foresees the fall and ordains it—the God whose character is expressed in physical law? The texts of Jesus have become so trite that we forget that they contain the same vision of 'God's mind in all things' that makes it so hard to believe in a personality in God, that makes prayer seem to us so futile."

We came out of the shrubbery upon a bank that dropped before us to a level lawn. I found myself in the midst of a company of people among whom were the other members of the new School Council. Below, upon the lawn, there was a little spectacle going on for our entertainment—a morris-dance, simply and gracefully performed by young

people dressed in quaintly fashioned frocks of calico; there was good music too—one or two instruments, to which they danced. Round the other side of the grass an avenue of stately Canadian maples shut in the view, except where the river or the pale blue of the eastern horizon was seen in glimpses through their branches. Behind us the sun's declining rays fell upon an old-fashioned garden of hollyhocks and asters, so that the effect, as one caught it turning sideways, was like light upon a stained-glass window, so rich were the dyes. I saw all this only as one sees the surroundings of some object that interests supremely.

The man who had been walking with me said simply, "This is my wife."

Before me stood a woman who had the power that some few women have of making all those whom they gather round them speak out clearly

and freshly the best that is in them.

Ah! we live in a new country. Its streets are not paved with gold, nor is prosperity to be attained without toil; but it gives this one advantage—room for growth; whatever virtue a soul contains may reach its full height and fragance and colour, if it will.

I did not know then that the beginning of this provincial *salon*, which Toyner's wife had kept about her for so many years, and to which she gave a genuine brilliance, however raw the material, had been a wooden shanty, in which a small income was made by the sale of home-brewed beer.

I always remember Ann Toyner as I saw her that first time. Her eyes were black and still bright; but when I looked at them I remembered the little children that had died in her arms, and I knew

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that her hopes had not died with them, but by that suffering had been transformed. As I heard her talk, my own hopes lifted themselves above their ordinary level.

Husband and wife stood together, and I noticed that the white shawl that was crossed Quakerwise over her thin shoulders seemed like a counterpart of his careful dress, that the white tresses that were beginning to show among her black ones were almost like a reflection of his white hair. I felt that in some curious way, although each had so distinct and strong a personality, they were only perfect as a part of the character which in their union formed a perfect whole. They stood erect and looked at us with frank, kindly eyes; we all found to our surprise that we were saying what we thought and felt, and not what we supposed we ought to say.

As I talked and looked at them, the words that I had heard came back to my mind. "His wife is the daughter of a murderer, and he has come up from the lowest, vilest life." Some indistinct thought worked through my mind whose only expression was a disconnected phrase: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth."

In the years since then I have learned to know the story of Toyner and his wife. Now that they are gone away from us, I will tell what I know. His was a life which shows that a man cut off from all contact with his brother-thinkers may still be worked upon by the great over-soul of thought: his is the story of a weak man who lived a strong life in a strength greater than his own.

THE

CHAPTER II.

In the days when there were not many people in Fentown Falls, and when much money was made by the lumber trade, Bartholomew Toyner's father grew rich. He was a Scotchman, not without some education, and was ambitious for his son ; but he was a hard, ill-tempered man, and consequently neither his example nor his precepts carried any weight whatever with the son when he was grown. The mother, who had begun life cheerfully and sensibly, showed the weakness of her character in that she became habitually peevish. She had enough to make her so. All her pleasure in life was centred in her son Bart. Bart came out of school to lounge upon the streets, to smoke immoderately, and to

drink such large quantities of what went into the country by the name of "Jamaica," that in a few years it came to pass that he was nearly always drunk.

Poor Bart! the rum habit worked its heavy chains upon him before he was well aware that his life had begun in earnest; and when he realised that he was in possession of his full manhood, and that the prime of life was not far off, he found himself chained hand and foot, toiling heavily in the most degrading servitude. A few more years and he realised also that, do what he would, he could not set himself free. No one in the world had any knowledge of the struggle he made. Some —his mother among them— gave him credit for trying now and then, and that was a charitable view of his case. How could any man know? He was not born with the nature that reveals itself in

many words, or that gets rid of its intolerable burdens of grief and shame by passing them off upon others. All that any one could see was the inevitable failure.

The failure was the chief of what Bart himself saw. That unquenchable instinct in a man's heart that if he had only tried a little harder he would certainly have attained to righteousness gave the lie to his sense of agonising struggle, with its desperate rallies of courage and sinkings of discouragement, gleams of self-confidence, and foul suspicion of self, suspicion even as to the reality of his own effort. All this was in the region of unseen spirit, almost as much unseen to those about him as are the spirits of the dead men and angels, often a mere matter of faith to himself, so apart did it seem from the outward realities of life.

Outwardly the years went

easily enough. The father railed and stormed, then relapsed into a manner of silent contempt; but he did not drive his son from the plain, comfortable home which he kept. Bart would not work, but he took some interest in reading. Paper-covered infidel books, and popular books on modern science, were his choice rather than fiction. The choice might have been worse, for the fiction to which he had access was more enervating. Outside his father's house he neglected the better class of his neighbours, and fraternised with the men and women that lived by the lowest bank of the river; but his life there was still one into which the fresh air and the sunshine of the Canadian climate entered largely. If he lounged all day, it was on the benches in the open air; if he played cards all night, he was not given much money to waste; and there were few women to

lend their companionship to the many drunkards of whom he was only one. Then, also, Bart did not do even all the evil that he might. What was the result of that long struggle of his which always ended in failure? The failure was only apparent; the success was this mighty one—that he did not go lower, he did not leave Fentown Falls for the next town upon the river, a place called The Mills, where his life could have been much worse. He fell in love with Ann Markham; and although she was the daughter of the wickedest man in Fentown, she was—according to the phraseology of the place—"a lady." She kept a small beer-shop that was neat and clean; she lived so that no man dared to say an uncivil word to her or to the sister whom she protected. She did for her father very much what Bart's father did for him: she kept a decent

house over his head and decent clothes upon his back, and threw a mantle of thrifty respectability over him.

Ann was no prude, and she certainly was no saint. Twice a week there was the sound of fiddling and dancing feet in a certain wooden hall that stood near the river; and there, with the men and women of the worldly sort, Ann and her sister danced. It was their amusement; they had no other except the idle talking and laughing that went on over the table at which Ann sold her home-brewed beer. Ann's end in life was just the ordinary one—respectability, or a moderate righteousness, first, and after that, pleasure. She was a strong, vigorous, sunbrowned maiden; she worked hard to brew her beer and to sell it. She ruled her sister with an inflexible will. She had much to say to men whom she liked and admired. She neither liked nor admired

Bart Toyner, never threw him a word unless in scorn; yet he loved her. She was the star by which he steered his ship in those intervals in which his eyes were clear enough to steer at all; and the ship did not go so far out of the track as it would otherwise have gone. When a man is in the right course, with a good hope of the port, rowing and steering, however toilsome, is a cheerful thing; but when the track is so far lost that the sailor scarcely hopes to regain it—then perhaps (God only knows) it requires more virtue to row and steer at all, even though it be done fitfully.

This belief that he could never come to any desired haven was the one force above all others that went to the ruining of Toyner's life.

CHAPTER III.

BART TOYNER was more than thirty years old when the period of his reformation came. His father had grown old and foolish. It was the breaking down of his father's clear mind that first started and shocked Bart into some strong emotion of filial respect and love; then came another agonising struggle on his part to free himself from his evil habits. In this fit of sobriety he went a journey to the nearest city upon his father's business, and there, after a few days, he took to drinking harder than ever, ceased to write home, lost all the possessions that he had taken with him, and sank deep down into the mire of the place.

The first thing that he remembered in the awakening

that followed was the face of another man. It stood out in the nebulous gathering of his returning self-consciousness like the face of an angel; there was the flame of enthusiasm in the eyes, a force of will had chiselled handsome features into tense lines; but in spite of that, or rather perhaps because of it, it was a gentle, happy face.

It is happiness that is the culmination of sainthood. You may look through the pictures of the saints of all ages and find enthusiasm and righteousness in many and the degree of faith that these imply; but where you find joy too, there has been the greatest faith, the greatest saintliness.

Bart found himself clothed and fed; he felt the warm clasp of a human hand in his, and some self-respect came back to him by the contact. The face and the hand belonged to a mission preacher, and Bart arose and followed

his friend to a place where there was the sound of many feet hurrying and a great concourse of people was gathered in a wood without the town.

It was only with curiosity that Bart looked about him at the high trees that stretched their green canopy above, at the people who ranged themselves in a hollow of the wood —one of nature's theatres. Curiosity passed into strong emotion of maudlin sentiment when the great congregation sang a hymn. He sat upon a bench at the back and wept tears that even to himself had neither sense nor truth. Yet there was in them the stirring of something inarticulate, incomprehensible, like the stirring that comes at spring-time in the heart of the seed that lies below the ground. After that the voice of the preacher began to make its way slowly through the dull, dark mind of the drunkard.

The preacher spoke of the

wonderful love of God manifested in a certain definite offer of salvation, a certain bargain, which, if closed with, would bring heaven to the soul of every man.

The preacher belonged to that period of this century when the religious world first threw off its contempt for the present earthly life and began to preach, not a salvation from sin's punishment so much as a salvation from sin.

It was the old cry: "Repent, believe; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The doctrine that was set forth had not only the vital growth of ages in it, but it had accreted the misunderstanding of the ages also; yet this doctrine did not hide, it only limited, the saving power of God. "Believe," cried the preacher, "in a just God and a Saviour." So he preached Christ unto them, just as he supposed St. Paul to have done, wotting nothing of the fact that every

word and every symbol stand for a different thought in the minds of men with every revolution of that glass by which Time marks centuries.

It mattered nothing to Bart just now all this about the centuries and the doctrines; the heart of the preaching was the eternal truth that has been growing brighter and brighter since the world began—God, a living Power, the Power of Salvation. The salvation was conditioned, truly; but what did conditions matter to Bart! He would have cast himself into sea or fire to obtain the strength that he coveted. He eagerly cast aside the unbelief he had imbibed from books. He accepted all that he was told to accept, with the eager swallowing of a man who is dying for the strength of a drug that is given to him in dilution.

At the end of the sermon there was a great call made upon all who desired to give

up their sins and to walk in God's strength and righteousness, to go forward and kneel in token of their penitence and pray for the grace which they would assuredly receive.

This public penance was a very little thing, like the dipping in Jordan. It did not seem little to Toyner. He was thoroughly awake now, roused for the hour to the power of seeking God with all his mind, all his thought, all his soul. The high tide of life in him made the ordeal terrible; he tottered forward and knelt where, in front of the rostrum, sweet hay had been strewn upon the ground. A hundred penitents were kneeling upon this carpet.

There was now no more loud talking or singing. Silence was allowed to spread her wings within the woodland temple. Toyner, kneeling, felt the influence of other human spirits deeply vivified in the intensity of prayer. He heard whispered

cries and the sound of tears, the prayer of the publican, the tears of the Magdalene, and now and then there came a glad thanksgiving of overflowing joy. Toyner tried to repeat what he heard, hoping thereby to give some expression to the need within him; but all that he could think of was the craving for strong drink that he knew would return and that he knew he could not resist.

He heard light footsteps, and felt a strong arm embracing his own trembling frame. The preacher had come to kneel where he knelt, and to pray, not for him, but with him.

"I cannot," said Bart Toyner, "I can't, I can't."

"Why not?" whispered the preacher.

"Because I know I shall take to drink again."

"Which do you love best, God or the drink?" asked the preacher. "If you love

the drink best, you ought not to be here; if you love God best, you need have no fear."

"God." The word embodied the great new idea which had entered Toyner's soul, the idea of the love that had power to help him.

"I want to get hold of God," he said; "but it isn't any use, for I shall just go and get drunk again."

"Dear, dear fellow," said the young preacher, his arm drawing closer round Bart, "He is able and willing to keep you; all you have to do is to take Him for your Master, and He will come to you and make a new man of you. He will take the drink crave away. He knows as well as you do that you can't fight it."

"I don't believe it," said Toyner.

Then the young preacher turned his beautiful face toward the blue above the trees and whispered a prayer: "Open the eyes of our souls that we

may see Thee, and then we shall know that Thou canst not lie. Thy honour is pledged to give Thy servants all they need, and this man needs to have the craving for drink taken out of his body. He has come at Thy call, willing to be Thy slave; Thou canst not go back on Thy promises. We know Thou hast accepted him, because he has come to Thee. We know that Thou wilt give him what he needs,"—so the short sentences of the whispered prayer went on in quick transition from entreaty to thanksgiving for a gift received. Suddenly, before the conclusion had come, Bart stood up upon his feet.

"What is it, my brother?" asked the preacher. He too had risen and stood with his hand on Toyner's shoulder.

They were alone together, these two. The great crowd of the congregation had already gone away; those that re-

mained were each one so intensely occupied with prayer or adoration that they paid no heed to others.

"I feel—light," said Toyner.

"Dear fellow," said the preacher, "the devil has gone out of you. You are free now because you are the slave of Christ. Begin your service to him by praising God!"

Toyner stayed a week longer in the place, lodging with the young preacher. Day and night they were close together. A change had come to Toyner. It was a miracle. The young preacher believed in such miracles, and because he believed he saw them often.

Toyner trembled and hoped, and at length he too believed. He believed that as long as he willingly obeyed God his old habits would not triumph over him. The physical health which so often comes like a flood and replaces disease at the shrines of idol temples, of Romish saints,

or at the many Protestant homes for faith-healing, had undoubtedly come to Bart Toyner. The stomach that had been inflamed and almost useless, now produced in him a regular appetite for simple nourishing food. The craving for strong drink had passed away, and with his whole mind and heart he threw himself into such service as he believed to be acceptable to God and the condition upon which he held his health and his freedom. At the end of the week Toyner went home to face the old life again with no safeguard but the new inward strength. No one there believed in his reformation. He had lost money for his father in his last debauch ; the man who was virtually a partner would not trust him again. He had a nominal business of his own, an agency which he had heretofore neglected, and now he worked hard,

living frugally, and for the first time in his life earned his own living. The rules of conduct which the preacher had laid down for him were simple and broad. He was to see God in everything, accepting all events joyfully from His hand; he was so to preach Him in life and word that others would love Him; he was to do all his work as unto a God who beheld and cared for the minutest things of earth; he was to abstain, not only from all sin, but from all things that might lead to evil. At first he saw no contradiction in this rule of life; it seemed a plain path, and he walked, nay ran, upon it for a long distance.

Between Toyner and his old friends the change of his life and thoughts had made the widest breach. That outward show of companionship remained was due only to patient persistence on his part and the endurance of the pain

and shame of being in society where he was not wanted and where he felt nothing congenial. There was a Scotch minister who, with the people of his congregation, had received and befriended the reformed man; but because of Toyner's desire to follow the most divine example, and also because of his love to Ann Markham, he chose the other companionship. It was a high ideal; something warred against it which he could not understand, and his patience brought forth no mutual love.

When six months had passed away, Toyner had gained with his neighbours a character for austerity in his personal habits and constant companionship with the rough and the poor. The post of constable fell vacant; Toyner's father had been constable in his youth; Toyner was offered the post now, and he took it.

The constable in such villages as Fenton was merely

a respectable man who could be called upon on rare occasions to arrest a criminal. Crime was seldom perpetrated in Fentown, except when it was of a nature that could be winked at. Toyner had no uniform; he was put in possession of a pair of handcuffs, which no one expected him to use; he was given a nominal income; and the name of "constable" was a public recognition that he was reformed.

Toyner had had many scruples of mind before he took this office. The considerations which induced him to accept it were various. The austere demand of law and the service of God were very near together in his mind; nor are they in any strong mind ever separated except in parable.

Bart Toyner, who had for years appeared so weak and witless, possessed in reality that fine quality of brain and

heart which is so often a prey to the temptation of intoxicants. He was now working out all the theory of the new life in a mind that would not flinch before, or shirk the gleams of truth struck from, sharp contact of fact with fact as the days and hours knocked them together. For this reason it could not be that his path would remain that plain path in which a man could run seeing far before him. Soon he only saw his way step by step, around there was darkness; but through that darkness, except in one black hour, he always saw the mount of transfiguration and the light of heaven.

THE

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER six months passed, and an event occurred which gave a great shock to the little community and gave Toyner a pain of heart such as almost nothing else could have given. Ann's father, John Markham, had a deadly dispute with a man by the name of Walker. Walker was a comparatively new comer to the town, or he would have known better than to gamble with Markham as he did and arouse his enmity. The feud lasted for a week, and then Markham shot his enemy with a borrowed fire-arm. Walker was discovered wounded, and cared for, but with little hope of his recovery. From all around the men assembled to seize Markham, but half a night had elapsed,

and it was found that he had made good his escape. When the others had gone, Toyner stood alone before Ann Markham.

I have often heard what Toyner looked like in those days. Slight as his theological knowledge might be, he was quite convinced that if religion was anything it must be everything, personal appearance included. As he stood before Ann, he appeared to be a dapper, rather dandified man, fo he had dressed himself just as well as he could. Everything that he did was done just as well as he could in those days; that was the reason he did not shirk the inexpressibly painful duty which now devolved on him.

You may picture him. His clothes were black, his linen good. He wore a large white tie, which was the fashionable thing in that time and place. His long moustache, which was fine rather than heavy,

hung down to his chin on either side of his mouth. He did not look like a man who would chance upon any strong situation in life, for the strength of circumstances is the strength of the soul that opposes them, and we are childishly given to estimating the strength of souls by certain outward tests, although they fail us daily.

"I have always been your friend, Ann," said Toyner sadly.

Ann tossed her head. "Not with my leave."

"No," he assented; "but I want to tell you now that if we can't get on Markham's track I shall have to spy on you. You'll help him if you can, of course."

"I don't know where he is," said Ann sullenly.

"I do not believe you are telling the truth" (sadly); "but you may believe *me*, I have warned you."

People in Fentown went to

sleep early. At about eleven that night all was still and lonely about the weather-stained, unpainted wooden house in which Ann lived.

Ann closed her house for the night. The work was a simple one: she set her knee against the door to shut it more firmly, and worked an old nail into the latch. Then she shook down the scant cotton curtains that were twisted aside from the windows. There were three windows, two in the living-room (which was also kitchen and beer-saloon) and one in the bedroom; that was the whole of the house. There was not an article of furniture in the place that was not absolutely necessary; what there was was clean. The girl herself was clean, middle-sized, and dressed in garments that were old and worn; there was about her appearance a certain brightness and quickness, which is the best part of

beauty and grace. The very hair itself, turning black and curly, from the temples, seemed to lie glossy and smooth by reason of character that willed that it should lie so.

One small coal-oil lamp was the light of the house. When Ann had closed doors and windows she took it up and went into the bedroom. Neither room was small; there was a shadowy part round their edges which the lamp did not brighten. In the dimmer part of this inner room was a bed, on which a fair young girl was sleeping.

A curious thing now occurred. Ann, placing herself between the lamp and the window, deliberately went through a pantomime of putting herself to bed. She took care that the shadow of the brushing of her hair should be seen upon the window-curtain. She measured the distance, and threw her silhouette clearly upon it while she took off one

or two of her outer garments. Her face had resolution and nervous eargerness written in it, but there was nothing of inward disquiet there; she was wholly satisfied in her own mind as to what she was doing. It was not a very profound mind, perhaps, but it was like a weapon burnished by constant and proper use.

She removed her shadow from the window-curtain when she removed her lamp to the bedside. She employed herself there for a minute or two in putting on the clothes she had taken off, and in tightly fastening up the hair that she had loosened; then she put out the lamp and got into bed. The wooden bedstead creaked, and rubbed against the side of the house as she turned herself upon it. The creaking and rubbing could be heard on the other side of the wall.

There was a man walking like a sentry outside who did

hear. It was Bart Toyner, the constable.

After he heard the bed creak he still waited awhile, walking slowly round the house in silence and darkness. Then, as he passed the side where the bedroom was, there came the sound of a slight sleeping snore, repeated as regularly as the breath might come and go in a woman's breast.

After a while Toyner retreated with noiseless steps, standing still when he had moved away about fifty paces, looking at the house again with careful, suspicious eyes; then, as if satisfied, he slid back the iron shade that covered his lantern and, lighting his own steps, he walked away.

He had moved so quietly that the girl who lay upon the bed did not hear him. She did not, in fact, know for certain whether he had been there or not, much less that he had gone, so that she toilsomely kept up the pretence of that

gentle snore for half an hour or more. It was very tiresome. Her bright black eyes were wide open as she lay performing this exercise. Her face never lost its look of strong resolution. At length, true to her acting, she moved her head sleepily, sighed heavily, and relapsed into silent breathing as a sleeper might. It was the acting of a true artist.

Half an hour more of silence upon her bed, and she crept off noiselessly; she lifted the corner of the window-curtain and looked out. There was not a light to be seen in any of the houses within sight, there was not a sound to be heard except the foam at the foot of the falls, the lapping of the nearer river, and the voice of a myriad crickets in the grass. She opened the window silently.

"Bart," she whispered. Then a little louder, "Bart—Bart Toyner."

The one thing that she

wanted just then was to be alone, and of all people in the world Toyner was the man whom she least wanted to meet. Yet she called him. She got out of the window and took a few paces on one side and on the other in the darkness, still calling his name in a voice of soft entreaty. In his old drunken days she had scorned him. She scorned him now more than ever, but she still believed that her call would never reach his ear in vain. In this hour of her extremity she must make sure of his absence by running the risk of having to endure his nearer presence. When she knew that he was not there, she took a bundle from inside the room, shut down the window through which she had escaped, and wrapping her head and hands in a thin black shawl such as Indian women drape themselves with, she sped off over the dark grass to the river.

Overhead the stars sparkled

in a sky that seemed almost black. The houses and trees, the thick scrubby bushes and long grass, were just visible in all the shades of monochrome that night produces.

In a few minutes she was beyond all the houses, gliding through a wood by the river. The trees were high and black, and there was a faint musical sound of wind in them. She heard it as she heard everything. More than once she stopped, not fearful, but watching. She must have looked like the spirit of primeval silence as she stood at such moments, lifting her shawl from her head to listen ; then she went on. She knew where a boat had by chance been left that day ; it was a small rough boat, lying close under the roots of a pine tree, and tied to its trunk. In this she bestowed her bundle, and untying the string, pushed from the shore. She could hardly see the opposite side

of the little Ahwewee in the darkness; she rowed at once into the midst of its rapid current; once there, she dipped her oars to steer rather than to propel. She travelled swiftly with the black stream.

For half an hour or more she was only intent upon steering her boat. Then, when she had come about three miles from the falls, she was in still water, and began rowing with all her strength to make the boat shoot forward as rapidly as before.

The water was as still now as if the river had widened and deepened into an inland sea; yet in the darkness to all appearance the river was as narrow, the outline of the trees on either side appearing black and high just within sight. When the moon rose this mystery of nature was revealed, for the river was a lake, spreading far and wide on either side. The lake was caused by dams built farther

down the stream, and the forest that had covered the ground before still reared itself above the water, the bare dead trees standing thick, except in the narrow, winding passage of the original stream.

The moon rose large, very large indeed, and very yellow. There was smoke of distant forest fires in the dry hot air, which turned the moon as golden as a pane of amber glass. There was no fear of fire in the forest through which the boat was passing other than that cold pretence of yellow flames, the broken reflections of the moon on the wet mirror in which the trees were growing. These trees would not burn ; they had been drowned long ago! They stood up now like corpses or ghosts, rising from the deathly flood, lifeless and smooth ; ghastly, in that they retained the naked shape that they had had when alive. To the east the reflection of the

moon was seen for a mile or more under their grey outstretched branches, and on all sides its light penetrated, showing through what a strange dead wilderness the one small fragile boat was travelling.

Very little of the feeling of the place entered the mind of the girl who was working at her oars with such strong, swift strokes. Every day through the ten or fifteen miles of the dead forest a little snorting steamboat passed, bearing market produce and passengers. The smoke of its funnel had blasted all sense of the weird picturesqueness of the place in the minds of the inhabitants, that is, they were accustomed to it, and sentiment in most hearts is slowly killed by use and wont, as this forest had been killed by the encroaching water. Ann Markham's was not a mind which harboured very much sentiment at that period of her life; it was a keen, quick-witted, practical mind. She

was not afraid of the solitude of the night, or of the strange shapes and lights and shadows about her. Now that she knew for certain that she was alone and unpursued, she was for the time quite satisfied.

A mile more down the windings of the lake, and Ann began counting the trees between certain landmarks. Then into an opening between the trees which could not have been observed by a casual glance she steered her boat, and worked it on into a little open passage-way among their trunks. The way widened as she followed it, and then closed again. Where the passage ended, one great tree had fallen, and its trunk with upturned branches was lying, wedged between two standing trunks, in an almost horizontal position. On it a man was sitting, a wild, miserable figure of a man, who looked as if he might have been some savage

being who was at home there, but who spoke in a language too vicious and profane for any savage.

He leaned out from his branch as far as he dared, and welcomed the girl with curses because she had not come sooner, because it was now the small hours of the night and he had expected her in the evening.

"Be quiet, father," said the girl; "what's the use of talking like that!" Then she held the boat under the tree and helped him to slip down into it, where, in spite of his rage, he stretched his legs with an evident animal satisfaction. He wallowed in the straitened liberty that the boat gave, lying down in the bottom and gently kicking out his cramped limbs, while the girl held tight to the trees, steadying the boat with her feet.

It was this power of taking an evident sensual satisfaction in such small luxuries as he

was able to obtain that had alone attached Markham to his daughter. His character belonged to a type found both among men and women; it was a nature entirely selfish and endowed with an instinctive art in working upon the unselfish sentiments of others—an art which even creates unselfishness in other selfish beings.

"I came as soon as I could," she said. "I suppose you did not want me to put Toyner on your track."

"Yee owe," said the wretched man, stretching himself luxuriously. "I've been a-standin' up and a-sittin' down and a-standin' up since last night, an'——" Here he suddenly remembered something. He sat up and looked round fearfully.

"When it got dark before the moon came I saw the devil! One! I think there was half a dozen of them! I saw them comin' at me in

the air. I'd have gone mad if they hadn't gone off when the moon rose."

"Lie still, father, until I give you something to eat," she said.

While she was unfastening her bundle, she looked about her, and saw how the spaces of shadow between the grey branches might easily seem to take solid form and weird shape to a brain that was fevered with excitement of crime and of flight and enforced vigil. She had a painful thing to tell this man—that she could not, as she had hoped, release him from his desperate prison that night; but she did not tell him until she had fed him first and given him drink too. She insisted upon his taking the food first. It was highly seasoned, beef with mustard upon it, and pickles. All the while he watched her hand with thirsty eye. When he had gulped his food to please her, she

produced a small bottle. He cursed her when he saw its size, but all the same he held out his hand for it eagerly and drank its contents, shutting his eyes with satisfaction and licking his lips.

All this time she was steadying the boat by holding on to a tree with a strong arm.

"Now it's hard on you, father, but you'll have to stay here another night. Down at The Mills they're watching for you, and it would be sure death for you to try and get through the swamp, even if I could take you in the boat to the edge anywhere."

The man, who had been entirely absorbed with eating and drinking and stretching himself, now gave a low howl of anguish; then he struggled to his knees and shook his fist in her face. "By —— I'll throw you out of this 'ere boat, I will; what do yer come tellin' me such a thing as that for? Don't yer

know I'd liefer die—don't yer know that?" He brought his fist nearer and nearer to her eyes. "Don't yer know that?"

It appeared that he would have struck her, but by a dexterous twist of her body and a pull upon the tree she jerked the boat so that he lost his balance, not entirely, but enough to make him right himself with care and sit down again, realising for the time being that it was she who was mistress of this question—who should be thrown out of the boat and drowned.

"Of course I'll row you to The Mills, if it's to jail you want to go; but Walker is pretty bad, they say. I think it'll be murder they'll bring you up for; and it ain't no sort of use trying to prove that you didn't do it!"

The miserable man put his dirty knotted hands before his face and howled again. But even that involuntary sound

was furtive lest any one should hear. He might have shrieked and roared with all the strength that was in him—there was no human ear within reach—but the instinct of cowardice kept him from making any more noise than was necessary to rend and break the heart of the woman beside him,—that, although he was only half conscious of it, was his purpose in crying. He had a fiendish desire to make her suffer for bringing him such news.

Ann was not given to feeling for others, yet now it was intense suffering to her to see him shaking, writhing, moving like a beast in pain. She did not think of it as her suffering; she transferred it all to him, and supposed that it was the realisation of his misery that she experienced.

At last she said: "There's one fellow up to the falls that knows a track through the north of the marsh to

sound ground ; I heard him tell it one day how he'd found it out. It's that David Brown that's been coming round to see Christa. Christa can get the chart he made from him by to-morrow night—I know she can. I'll try to be here earlier than I was to-night. And I brought you strips of stuff, father, so that you could tie yourself on to the tree and have a sort of a sleep; and I brought a few drops of morphia, just enough to make you feel sleepy and stupid, and make the time pass a bit quicker."

For a long while he writhed and cried, telling her that it took all the wits that he had to keep awake enough to keep the devils off him without taking stuff to make him sleep, and that he was sure she'd never come back, and that he would very likely be left on the tree to rot or to fall into the water.

All that he said came so near to being true that it caused

her the utmost pain to hear it. He was clever enough by instinct, not by thought, to know that mere idle cries could not torture her as did the true picture of the fears and dangers that encompassed him in his wild hiding-place. The endurance of this torture exhausted her as nothing had ever exhausted her before; yet all the time she never doubted but that the pain was his, and that she was merely a spectator.

She soothed him at last, not by gentleness and caresses—no such communication ever passed between them—but by plain, practical, hopeful suggestions spoken out clearly in the intervals of his whining. At length she esteemed it time to use the spur instead of stroking him any longer. "Get up on the tree, father, and I will give you the rest of the things when you are fixed on the branch. If Toyner's stirring again before I get

home, he'll find means to keep me from coming to-morrow night. Climb up now. I'll give you the things. There —there isn't enough of the morphia drops to get you to sleep, only to make you feel easy ; and here's the strips of blanket I've sewed together to tie yourself on with. It's nice and soft—climb up now and fix yourself. It's Toyner that will catch me, and you too, if I don't get back. Look at the moon—near the middle of the sky."

She established him upon the branch again with the comforts that she had promised, and then she gave him one thing more, of which she had not spoken before. It was a bag of food that would last, if need be, for several days.

He took it as evidence that she had lied to him in her assurance that she could return the next night. As she moved her boat out of the secret openings among the dead trees,

she heard him whining with fear and calling a volley of curses after her.

That her father's words were all profane did not trouble Ann in the least. It was a meaningless trick of speech. Markham meant no more at this time by his most shocking oaths than does any man by his habitual expletive. Ann knew this perfectly. God knew it too.

Yet if his profanity was mechanical, the man himself was without trace of good. There was much reason that Ann's heart should be wrung with pity. It is the divine quality of kinship that it produces pity even for what is purely evil. Ann rowed her boat homeward with a hard determination in her heart to save her father at any cost.

THE

CHAPTER V.

An hour later the small solitary boat crept up the current of the moonlit river. The weary girl plied her oars, looking carefully for the nook under the roots of the old pine whence she had taken the boat.

She saw the place. She even glanced anxiously about the ground immediately around it, thinking that in the glamour of light she could see everything; and yet in that rapid glance, deluded, no doubt, into supposing the light greater than it was, she failed to see a man who was standing ready to help her to moor the boat.

Bart Toyner watched her with a look of haggard anxiety as she came nearer.

A uniform is a useful thing. It is almost natural to an

actor to play his part when he has assumed its dress. A man in any official capacity is often just an actor, and the best thing that he can do at times is to act without a thought as to how his inner self accords with the action, at least till we have attained to a higher level of civilisation. Toyner had no uniform, nor had he mastered the philosophy that underlies this instinct for playing a part; he had an idea that the whole mind and soul of him should be in conscientious accord with all that he did. It was this ideal that made his fall certain.

He had no notion that the girl had not seen him. Before she got out, when she put her hand to tether the boat, she felt his hand gently taking the rope from her and fell back with a cry of fear.

In her wearied state she could have sobbed with disappointment. How much had he discovered? If he

knew nothing more than merely that she had returned with the boat, how could it be possible to elude him and come again the next night? She thought of her father, and her heart was full of pity; she thought that her own plans were baffled, and she was enraged. Both sentiments fused into keener hatred of Toyner; but she remembered—yes, even then she remembered quite clearly and distinctly—that if the worst came to the worst and she could save her father in no other way, she had one weapon in reserve, one in which she had perfect faith.

It was for this reason that she sat still for a minute in the boat, looking up at Toyner, trying to pry into his attitude toward her. At the end of the minute he put out his hand to lift her up, and she leaned upon it.

Without hesitation she began to thread her way through

the wood toward home, and he walked by her side. He might have been escorting her from a dance, so quietly they walked together, except that the question of a man's life or death which lay between them seemed to surround them with a strange atmosphere.

At length Bart spoke. "I don't know where you have been," he said. "I have been patrolling the shore all night." He paused awhile. "I thought you were safe at home."

She stopped short and turned upon him. "Look here! what are you going to do now? It's a pretty mean sort of business this you've taken to, sneaking round your old friends to do them all the harm you can."

"It's the first time I knew that you'd ever been a friend of mine, Ann." He said this in a sort of sad aside, and then: "You've sense enough

to know that when a man shoots another man he's got to be found and shut up for the good of the country and for his own good too. It's the kindest thing that can be done to a man sometimes, shutting him up in jail." He said this last quite as much by way of explanation to himself as to her.

"Or hanging him," she suggested sarcastically.

He paused a moment. "I hope he won't come to that."

"But you'll do all you can to catch him, knowing that it's like to come to that. What's the good of hoping?"

He had only said it to soothe her. He had another self-justification.

"I can only do what I have to do: it is not me that will decide whether Walker dies or not. At any rate, it ain't no use to justify it to you. It's natural that you should look upon me as an enemy just now; but all the police in

the country are more your enemies than I am. You've got him off now, I suppose; however you've done it I don't pretend to know. It'll be some one else that catches him if he's caught."

She wondered if he was only saying this to try her, or if he really believed that Markham had gone far; yet there was small chance even then that he would cease to watch her the next night and the next. He had shown both resolution and diligence in this business —qualities, as far as she knew, so foreign to his character that she smiled bitterly.

"A nice sort of thing religion is, to get out of the mire yourself and spend your time kicking your old friends further in!"

Now the fugitive had been never a friend to Toyner, except in the sense that he had done more than any one else to lead him into low habits and keep him there.

He had, in fact, been his greatest enemy; but that, according to Toyner's new notions, was the more reason for counting him a friend, not the less.

"Well, I grant 'tain't a very grand sort of business being constable," he said; "to be a preacher 'ud be finer perhaps; but this came to hand and seemed the thing for me to do. It ain't kicking men in the mire to do all you can to stop them making beasts of themselves."

He stood idling in the moonlight as he justified himself to this woman. Surely it was only standing by his new colours to try to make his position seem right to her. He had no hope in it—no hope of persuading her, least of all of bringing her nearer to him; if he had had that, his dallying would have seemed sinful, because it would have chimed so perfectly with all his natural desires.

Ann took up her theme again fiercely. "Look here, Bart Toyner; I want to know one thing, honour bright—that is," scornfully, "if you care about honour now that you've got religion."

He gave a silent sarcastic smile, such as one would bestow upon a naughty, ignorant child. "Well, at least as much as I did before," he said.

"Well, then, I want to know if you're a-going to stop spying on me now that father has got well off? There ain't no cause nor reason for you to hang about me any longer. You know what my life has been, and you know that through it all I've kept myself like a lady. It ain't nice, knowing as people do that you came courting once, 'tain't nice to have you hanging round in this way."

He knew quite well that the reason she gave for objecting to his spying was not the true one. He had enough insight

into her character, enough knowledge of her manner and the modulations in her voice, to have a pretty true instinct as to when she was lying and when she was not; but he did not know that the allusion to the time when he used to court her was thrown out to produce just what it did in him, a tender recollection of his old hopes.

"Until Markham is arrested, you know, and every one else at Fentown knows, that it is my duty to see that you don't communicate with him. You've fooled me to-night, and I'll have to keep closer watch; but if you don't want me to do the watching, I can pay another man."

She had hoped faintly that he would have shown himself less resolute; now there was only one thing to be done. After all, she had known for days that she might be obliged to do it.

"I wouldn't take it so hard,

Bart, if it was any one but you," she said softly. She went on to say other things of this sort which would make it appear that there was in her heart an inward softness toward him which she had never yet revealed. With womanly instinct she played her little part well and did not exaggerate; but she was not speaking now to the man of drug-weakened mind and over-stimulated sense whom she had known in former years.

He spoke with pain and shame in his voice and attitude. "There isn't anything that I could do for you, Ann, that I wouldn't do as it is, without you pretending that way."

She did not quite take it in at first that she could not deceive him.

"I thought you used to care about me," she said; "I thought perhaps you did yet; I thought perhaps"—she put

well-feigned shyness into her tone—"that you weren't the sort that would turn away from us just because of what father has done. All the other folks will, of course. I'm pretty much alone."

"I won't help you to break the laws, Ann. Law and righteousness is the same for the most part. Your feeling as a daughter leads you the other way, of course; but it ain't no good—it won't do any good to him in the long run, and it would be wrong for me to do anything but just what I ought to do as constable. When that's done we can talk of being friends if you like, but don't go acting a lie with the hope of getting the better of me. It hurts me to see you do it, Ann."

For the first time there dawned in her mind a new respect for him, but that did not alter her desperate resolve. She had been standing before him in the moonlight with

downcast face; now she suddenly threw up her head with a gesture that reminded him of the way a drowning man throws up his hands.

"You've been wanting to convert me," she said. "You want me to sign the pledge, and to stop going to dances and playing cards, and to bring up Christa that way."

All the thoughts that he had had since his reform of what he could do for this girl and her sister if she would only let him came before his heart now, lit through and through with the light of his love that at that moment renewed its strength with a power which appalled him.

She took a few steps nearer to him.

"Father didn't mean to do any harm," she whispered hastily; "he's got no more sin on his soul than a child that gets angry and fights for what it wants. He's just like a child, father is; but it's been

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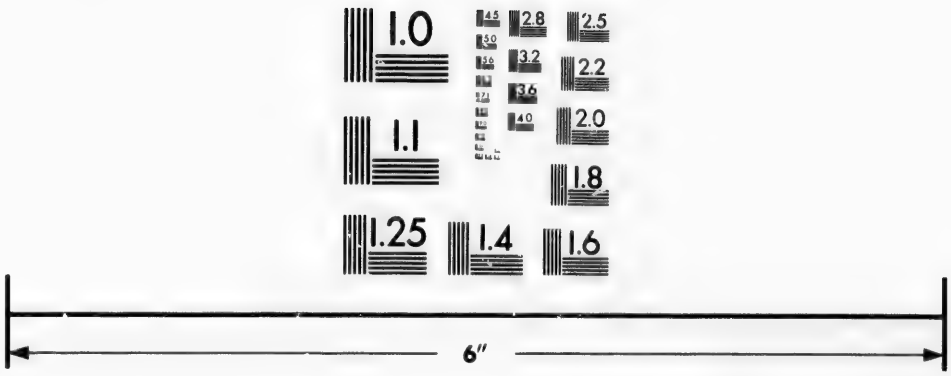

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a lesson to him, and he'll never do it again. Think of the shame to Christa and me if he was hanged. And I've striven so to keep us respectable—Bart, you know I have. There's no shame in the world like your father being——" (there was a nervous gasp in her throat before she could go on)—"and he'd be awfully frightened. Oh, you don't know how frightened he'd be! If I thought they were going to do that to him, it would just kill me. I'll do anything; I wouldn't mind so much if they'd take me and hang me instead—it wouldn't scare me so much: but father would be just like a child, crying and crying and crying, if they kept him in jail and were going to do that in the end. And then no one would expect Christa and me to have any more fun, and we never would have any. There's a way that you can get father off, Bart, and give him at least

one more chance to run for his life. If you'll do it, I'll do whatever you want,—I'll sign the pledge; I'll go to church; I'll teach Christa that way. She and I won't dance any more. You can count on me. You can trust me. You know that when I say a thing I'll do it."

He realised now what had happened to him—a thing that of all things he had learned to dread most,—a desperate temptation. He answered, and his tone and manner gave her no glimpse of the shock of opposing forces that had taken place within a heart that for many months had been dwelling in the calm of victory.

"I cannot do it, Ann."

"Bart Toyner," she said, "I'm all alone in this world; there's not a soul to help me. Every one's against me and against him. Don't turn against me; I need your help—oh, I need it! I never pro-

fessed to care about you; but if your father was in danger of dying an awful death and you came to me for help, I wouldn't refuse you, you know I wouldn't."

He only spoke now with the wish to conceal from her the panic within; for with the overwhelming desire to yield to her had come a ghastly fear that he was going to yield, and faith and hope fled from him. He saw himself standing there face to face with his idea of God, and this temptation between him and God. The temptation grew in magnitude, and God withdrew His face.

"I know, Ann, it sounds hard about your father" (mechanically); "but you must try and think how it would be if he was lying wounded like Walker and some other man had done it. Wouldn't you think the law was in the right then?"

"No!" (quickly). "If father'd got a simple wound,

and could be nursed and taken care of comfortably until he died, I wouldn't want any man to be hanged for it. It's an awful, awful thing to be hanged."

She waited a moment, and he did not speak. The lesser light of night is fraught with illusions. She thought that she saw him there quite plainly standing quiet and indifferent. She was so accustomed to his appearance—the carefulness of his dress, the grave eyes, and the thin, drooping moustache—that her mind by habit filled in these details which she did not in reality see; nor did she see the look of agonised prayer that came and went across the habitual reserve of his face.

"Can't you believe what I say, Bart? I say that I will give up dancing and selling beer, and sign the pledge, and dress plain, and go to church. I say I will do it and Christa will do it; and you can teach

us all you've a mind to, day in and day out, and we'll learn if we can. Isn't it far better to save Christa and me —two souls, than to hunt one poor man to death? Don't you believe that I'll do what I promise? I'll go right home now and give it to you in writing, if you like."

"I do believe you, Ann." He stopped to regain the steadiness of his voice. He had had training in forcing his voice in the last few months, for he hated to bear verbal testimony to his religious beliefs, and yet he had taught himself to do it. He succeeded in speaking steadily now, in the same strong voice in which he had learnt to pray at meetings. It was not exactly his natural voice. It sounded sanctimonious and ostentatious, but that was because he was forced to conceal that his heart within him was quaking. "I do believe that you would do what you say, Ann; but it

isn't right to do evil that good may come."

He did not appeal to her pity; he did not try to tell her what it cost him to refuse. If he could have made her understand that, she might have been turned from her purpose. He realised only the awful weakness and wickedness of his heart. He seemed to see those appetites which, up to a few months before, had possessed him like demons, hovering near him in the air, and he seemed to see God holding them back from him, but only for so long as he resisted this temptation.

To her he said aloud: "I cannot do it, Ann. In God's strength I cannot and will not do it."

Within his heart he seemed to be shouting aloud to Heaven: "My God, I will not do it, I will not do it. Oh, my God!" He turned his back upon her and went quickly to the village, only looking to see that at

some distance she followed him, trudging humbly as a squaw walks behind her Indian, as far as her own door.

CHAPTER VI.

When one drops one's plummet into life anywhere it falls the whole length of the line we give it. The man who can give his plummet the longest line is he who realises most surely that it has not touched the bottom.

Bart Toyner betook himself to prayer. He had learned from his friend the preacher that when a man is tempted he must pray until he is given the victory, and then, calm and steadfast, go out to face the world again. If Toyner's had been a smaller soul, the need of his life would have imperatively demanded then that just what he expected to happen to him should happen, and in some mysterious way no doubt it would have happened.

When we quietly observe religious life exactly as it is, without the bias of any theory, there are two constantly recurring facts which, taken together, excite deep astonishment: the fact that small minds easily attain to a certainty of faith to which larger minds attain more slowly and with much greater distress; and also the fact that the happenings of life do actually come in exact accordance to a man's faith—faith being not the mere expectation that a thing is going to take place, but the inner eye that sees into the heart of things, and knows that its desire must inevitably take place, and why. This sort of faith, be it in a tiny or great nature, comes triumphantly in actual fact to what it predicts; but the little heart comes to it easily and produces trivial prayers, while the big heart, thinking to arrive with the same ease at

the same measure of triumph, is beaten back time and time and again.

Probably the explanation is that the smaller mind has not the same germinating power; there is not enough in it to cause the long, slow growth of root and stem, and therefore it soon puts forth its little blossom. These things all happen, of course, according to eternal law of inward development; they are not altered by any force from without, because nothing is without: the sun that makes the daisy to blossom is just that amount of sun that it absorbs into itself, and so with the acorn or the pine-cone. These latter, however, do not produce any bright immediate blossom, though they ultimately change the face of all that spot of earth by the spread of their roots and branches.

After praying a long time Bart Toyner relapsed into meditation, endeavouring to

contemplate those attributes of his God which might bring him the strength which he had not yet attained, and just here came to him the subtlest and strongest reinforcement to all those arguments which were chiming together upon what appeared to him the side of evil. The God in whom he had learned to trust was a God who, moved by pity, had come out of His natural path to give a chance of salvation to wicked men by the sacrifice of Himself. To what did he owe his own rescue but to this special adjustment of law made by God? and how then was it right for him to adhere to the course the regular law imposed on him and to hunt down Markham? If he saved Markham, he would answer to the law for his own breach of duty—this would be at least some sacrifice. Was not this course a more God-like one?

There was one part of Toyner that spoke out clearly and

said that his duty was exactly what he had esteemed it to be before Ann Markham appealed to him. He believed this part of him to be his conscience.

All the rest of him slowly veered round to thoughts of mercy rather than legal duty; he thought of Ann and Christa with hard, godless hearts, surrounded by every form of folly and sin, and he believed that Ann would keep her promise to him, and that different surroundings would give them different souls. Yet he felt convinced that God and conscience forbade this act of mercy.

One thing he was as certain of now as he had been at the beginning—that if he disobeyed God, God would leave him to the power of all his evil appetites; he felt already that his heart gave out thoughts of affection to his old evil life.

As the hours passed he began to realise that he would

need to disobey God. He found himself less and less able to face the thought of giving up this rare opportunity of winning Ann's favour and an influence over her—*moral* influence at least; his mind was clear enough to see that what was gained by disobeying God's law was from a religious point of view nil. In his mind was the beginning of a contempt for God's way of saving him. If he was to win his own soul by consigning Ann and her father to probable perdition, he did not want to win it.

The August morning came radiant and fresh; the air, sharp with a touch of frost from neighbouring hills, bore strength and lightness for every creature. The sunlight was gay on the little wooden town, on its breezy gardens and wastes of flowering weeds, on the descent of the foaming fall, on the clear brown river. Even the sober wood of ash

and maple glistened in the morning light, and the birds sang songs that in countries where a longer summer reigns are only heard in spring-time.

Bart Toyner went out of the house exhausted and almost hopeless. The source of his strength had failed within him. He looked forward to defeat.

As it happened Toyner's official responsibility for Markham's arrest was to be lightened. The Crown Attorney for the county had already communicated with the local government, and a detective had been sent, who arrived that morning by the little steamboat. Before Toyner realised the situation he found himself in consultation with the new-comer as to the best means of seeking Markham. Did the perfect righteousness require that he should betray Ann's confidence and state that Markham was in hiding somewhere within reach? Bart looked the

question for a moment in the face, and trembled before it. Then he set it aside unanswered, resolved on reticence, whether it was right or wrong.

The detective, finding that Toyner had no clue to report, soon went to drink Ann's beer, on business intent. Bart kept sedulously apart from this interview. When it was over the stranger took Toyner by the arm and told him privately that he was convinced that the young woman knew nothing whatever about the prisoner, and as Markham had been gone now forty-eight hours it was his opinion that it was not near Fentown that he would be found.

This communication was made to Toyner in the public-house, where they had both gone the better to discuss their affairs. Toyner had gone in labouring under horrible emotion. He believed that he was going to get drunk, and the result of his fear was

that he broke his pledge, giving as an excuse to the by-standers that he felt ill. Yet he did not get drunk.

Toyner saw the detective depart by the afternoon boat, and as he walked back upon the bit of hot dusty road in the sun he reeled, not with the spirits he had taken, but with the sickening sense that his battle was lost.

Nothing seemed fair to him, nothing attractive, but to drink one more glass of spirits, and to go and make promises to Ann that would be sweet to her ear. He knew that for him it was the gate of death.

At this point the minister met him, and jumped at once to the conclusion that he was drunk. The minister was one of those good men who found their faith in God upon absolute want of faith in man. His heart was better than his head, as is the case with all small-minded souls that have come into conscious

contact with God, but his opinions ruled his official conduct. "I am afraid you have been drinking, Toyner," he said reproachfully.

The first three words, "I am afraid," were enough for Bart; he was filled himself with an all-pervading fear—a fear of himself, a fear of God, a fear of the devil who would possess him again. He was not drunk; the fact that drunkenness in him appeared so likely to this man, who was the best friend he had, completed in his heart the work of revolt against the minister and the minister's God. What right had God to take him up and clothe him and keep him in his right mind for a little while, just to let him fall at the first opportunity? It was quite true that he had deserved it, no doubt; he had done wrong, and he was going to do wrong; but God, who had gone out of His way to mercifully

convert him and keep him straight for a while, could certainly have gone on keeping him if He had chosen. His mind was a logical one. He had been taught to praise God for some extraordinary favour towards him ; he had been taught that the grace which had changed his life for good was in no degree his own ; and why then was he to bear all the disgrace of his return to evil ?

In the next hours he walked the streets of the town, and talked to other men when need was, and did a little business on his own account in the agency in which he was engaged, and went home and took supper, watching the vagaries of his father's senile mania with more than common pity for the old man. His own wretchedness gave him an aching heart of sympathy for all the sorrow of others which came across his mind that day.

The whole day was a new revelation to him of what tenderness for others could be and ought to be.

He did not hope to attain to any working out of this higher sympathy and pity himself. The wonderful confidence which his new faith had so long given him, that he was able in God's strength to perform the higher rather than the lower law of his nature, had ebbed away. God's strength was no longer with him; he was going to the devil; he could do nothing for himself, little for others; but he sympathised as never before with all poor lost souls. He was a little surprised, as the day wore to a close, that he had been able to control his craving, that he had not taken more rum. Still, he knew that he would soon be helpless. It was his doom, for he could awake in himself no further feeling of repentance or desire to return to God.

In the long day's struggle, half conscious and half unconscious, his love for Ann—and is was not a bad sort of love either—had triumphed over what principle he had; it had survived the sudden shock that had wrecked his faith. The hell which he was experiencing was intolerable now, because of the heaven which he had seen, and he could not forgive the God who had ordained it. The unreal notion that an omnipotent God can permit what He does not ordain could have no weight with him, for he was grappling with reality. As he brooded bitterly upon his own fate, his heart became enlarged with tenderness for all other poor helpless creatures like himself who were under the same misrule.

His resolution was taken—he would use his sobriety to help Ann. It would not profit himself, but still he would win from her the promise concerning her future

life and Christa's which she had offered him, and he would go that night and do all that a man could do to help the poor wretch to whom his heart went out with ever-increasing pity. It would not be much, but he would do what he could, and after that he would tell the authorities what he had done and give up his office. He had a very vague notion of the penalties he would incur; if they put him in prison, so much the better—it might save him a little longer from drinking himself to death.

Like an honest man he had given up attempting to pull God round to his own position. He did not now think for a moment that the act of love and mercy which possessed his soul was a pious one; his motive he believed to be solely his pity for Markham and his love for Ann, which, being natural, he supposed to be selfish, and, being selfish, he knew to be unholy.

It had all come to this, then—his piety, his reformation, his prayers, his thanksgiving, his faith. His heart within him gave a sneering laugh. He was terribly to blame, of course—he was a reprobate; but surely God was to blame too!

CHAPTER VII.

Ann Markham's thoughts of Bart that day were chiefly wondering thoughts. She tried to think scornfully of his refusal to help her; theoretically she derided the religion that produced the refusal, but in the bottom of her heart she looked at it with a wonder that was akin to admiration. Then there was a question whether he would remain fixed in his resolution. If this man did not love her then Ann's confidence failed her in respect to her judgment of what was or was not; for though she had regarded him always as a person of not much strength or importance, not independent enough to be anything more than the creature of the woman whom he desired to marry, yet, curiously

enough, she had believed that his love for her had a strength that would die hard. She did not stop to ask herself how it could be that a weak man could love her strongly. Love, in any constant and permanent sense of the word, was an almost unknown quality among her companions, and yet she had attributed it to Bart. Well! his refusal of last night proved that she had been mistaken—that was all. But possibly the leaven of her proposal would work, and he would repent and come back to her. The fact that he had evidently not betrayed her to the detective gave her hope of this. Her thoughts about Toyner were only subordinate to the question, how she was to rescue her father. With the light and strength of the morning, hope in other possibilities of eluding Bart, even if he remained firm, came back to her. She would at least work on; if she was

baffled in the end, it would be time enough to despair. Her sister was not her confidante, she was her tool.

Ann waited until the shadow of the pear tree, which with ripening fruit overhung the gable of their house, stretched itself far down the bit of weedy grass that sloped to the river. The grass plot was wholly untended, but nature had embroidered it with flowers and ferns.

Ann sat sewing by the table on which she kept her supply of beer. She could not afford to lose her sales to-day, although she knew bitterly that most of those who turned in for a drink did so out of prying curiosity. Even Christa, not very quick of feeling, had felt this, and had retired to lounge on the bed in the inner room with a paper novel. Christa usually spent her afternoon in preparing some cheap finery to wear in the cool of the evening, but she felt the family

disgrace and Ann's severity, and was disheartened. As Ann bided her time and considered her own occupation and Christa's, she marvelled at the audacity of the promise which she had offered to give Bart, yet so awful was the question at stake that her only wish was that he had accepted it.

At four o'clock in the afternoon she roused Christa and apportioned a certain bit of work to her. There was a young man in Fentown called David Brown, a comely young fellow, belonging to one of the richer families of the place. He was good-natured, and an athlete ; he had of late fallen into the habit of dropping in frequently to drink Ann's beer. She felt no doubt that Christa was his attraction. Some weeks before he had boasted that he had found the bed of a creek which made its way through the drowned forest, and that by it he had paddled

his canoe through the marsh that lay to the north of the lake. He had also boasted that he had a secret way of finding the creek again. Upon considering his character Ann believed that although the statement was given boastfully it was true. Brown had a trace of Indian blood in him, and possessed the faculties of keen observation and good memory. It was by the help of this secret that she had hoped to extricate her father herself. There was still a chance that she might be able to use it.

"Some men think the world and all of a woman if they can only get into the notion that she is ill-used. David may be more sweet on you than ever," said Ann to Christa. "Put on your white frock: it's a little mussed, so it won't look as if you were trying to be fine; don't put on any sash, but do your hair neatly."

She will look taking enough,

thought Ann to herself; she did not despise herself for the stratagem. It was part of the hard, practical game that she had played all her life, for that matter; she was not conscious of loving Christa any more than she was conscious of loving her father. It was merely her will that they should have the utmost advantage in life that she could obtain for them. Nothing short of a moral revolution could have changed this determination in her.

When Christa had performed her toilet, obeying Ann from mere habit, Ann drilled her in the thing she was to do. Brown would of course suspect what this information was to be used for. Christa was to coax him to promise secrecy. Ann went over the details of the plan again and again, until she was quite sure that the shallow forgetful child understood the importance of her mission.

Christa sat with her elbows on the table and cried a little. Her fair hair was curled low over her eyes, the coarse white dress hung limp but soft, leaving her neck bare. With all her motions her head nodded on her slender graceful neck, like a flower which bows on its stalk.

Before this disaster Christa had spent her life laughing; that had been more becoming to her than sullenness and tears. For all that, Ann was not sorry that Christa's eyelids should be red when David Brown was seen slowly lounging toward the window.

He had not been to see them the day before; it was apparent from his air that he thought it was not quite the respectable thing to do to-day. He tried to approach the house with a *nonchalant*, happen-by-chance air, so that if any one saw him they would suppose his stopping merely accidental.

Ann poured out his beer.

Christa looked at him with eyes full of reproach. Then she got up and went away to the doorstep, and stood looking out. To the surprise of both of them, David did not follow her there. He stood still near Ann.

"It's hard on Christa," said Ann with a sigh; "she has been crying all day. Every one will desert us now, and we shall have to live alone without friends."

"Oh no" (abruptly); "nobody blames you."

"I don't mind for myself so much; I don't care so much about what people think, or how they treat me." She lifted her head proudly as she spoke. "But" (with pathos) "it's hard on Christa."

"No; you never think of yourself, do you?" David giggled a little as he said it, betraying that he felt his words to be unusually personal. Ann wondered for a minute what could be the cause of

this giggle, and then she returned to the subject of Christa's suffering.

"Look here," he interrupted, "if there's any little thing I can do to help you, like lending you money if you're left hard up, or anything of that sort, you know" (he was blushing furiously now), it's for you I'd do it," he blurted out. "I don't care about Christa."

"The silly fellow!" thought Ann. She was six years older than he, and she felt herself to be twenty years older. She entirely scorned his admiration in its young folly; but she did not hesitate a moment to make use of it. All her life had been a long training in that thrift which utilised everything for family gain. She was a thorough woman of society, this girl who sat in her backwoods cottage selling beer.

She looked at the boy, and a sudden glow of sensibility

appeared in her face. "Oh, David!" she said; "I thought it was Christa."

"But it isn't Christa," he stammered, grinning. He was hugely pleased with the idea that she had accepted his declaration of courtship.

Half an hour later and Ann had the secret of the new track through the north of the drowned forest, and Brown had the wit not to ask her what she wanted to do with it. He had done more—he had offered to row her boat for her, but this Ann had refused.

It was a curious thing, this refusal. It arose purely from principle on her part; she had come to the limit which the average mind sets to the evil it will commit. She deceived and cajoled the boy without scruple, but she did not allow him to break the law. She remembered that he had parents who valued his good name more than he had

as yet learned to value it. He was young; he was in her power; and she declined his further help.

Christa had wandered down the grass to the river-side and stood there pouting meanwhile.

CHAPTER VIII.

THIS incident with David Brown and the getting possession of his chart was the one stimulant that helped Ann to endure this long day of inactivity. It was like a small thimbleful of wine to one who longed for a generous draught; there was nothing else to do but to wait, alert for all chances that might help her. Evening closed in; the sisters were left alone. Christa returned indolently to lounging upon the bed and reading her novel. If Ann had had less strength, she would have paced the floor of the outer room in impatience; as it was she sat still by the table which held the beer and stitched her seam diligently. About eight o'clock she heard Toyner's step.

Was he going to haunt the house again in order to keep her from going out of it?

He came up to the door and came in.

She was preparing herself to act just as if she did not know who had come, and did not take much notice of him; but when he came up and she looked at his face in the lamp-light, she saw written in it the struggle that he had gone through. Its exact nature and detail she was incapable of conceiving, but one glance proved to her its reality. She was struck by the consciousness of meeting an element in life which was wholly new to her. When such a thing forces itself upon our attention, however indefinite and unexpressed may be our thought, it is an experience never to be forgotten. Ann fought against her conviction. She began at once, as intelligent humanity always does, to explain away what she did not understand,

supposing by that means that she could do away with its existence.

"I think you are ill, Bart," she said quickly. "It looks to me as if you were in for a bout of chills; and enough to give it to you too, hanging about in the woods all night."

He drew a chair close to the table and sat down beside her.

"There isn't any chills in the swamps about here," he said; "they are as wholesome as dry land is." She saw by this that he had no intention of upbraiding her with his fall, or of proclaiming the object of his visit. She wanted to rouse him into telling her something.

"I heard them saying something about you to-day that I didn't believe a bit. I heard you were in the saloon drinking."

He took hold of the end of her seam, passed his finger along it as if examining the

fabric and the stitches. "I took one glass," he said, with the curious quiet gravity which lay to-night like a spell upon all his words and actions.

"Well," she said cheerily, "I don't believe in a man making a slave of himself, not to take a glass when he wants it just because he sometimes makes a beast of himself by taking more than he ought."

"If you choose to think black is white, Ann, it will not make it that way."

"That's true," she replied compliantly; "and you've got more call to know than I have, for I've never 'been there.'"

"God forbid!" he said with sudden intensity. All the habits of thought of the last year put strength into his words. "If I thought you ever could be 'there,' Ann, it's nothing to say that I'd die to save you from it."

She let her thought dwell for a moment upon the picture

of herself as a drunkard which had caused such intense feeling in him. "I am not worth his caring what becomes of me in that way," she thought to herself. It was the first time it ever occurred to her to think that she was unworthy of the love he had for her; but at the same moment she felt a shadow extinguish the rays of hope she had begun to feel, for she believed, as Bart did, that his piety was in direct opposition to the help he might otherwise give her. She had begun to hope that piety had loosened its grasp upon him for the time.

"I don't know what's to become of us, Christa and me," she said despairingly; "if we don't take to drink it will be a wonder, everybody turning the cold shoulder on us."

This was not her true thought at all. She knew herself to be quite incapable of the future she suggested, but the theme was excellently

adapted to work upon his feelings.

"I'm going away to-night, Ann," he said; "perhaps I won't see you again for a long time; but you know all that you said you would promise last night——"

Her heart began to beat so sharply against her side with sudden hope, and perhaps another feeling to which she gave no name, that her answer was breathless. "Yes," she said eagerly, "if——"

He went on gravely: "I am going to start to-night in a row-boat for The Mills. You can tell me where your father is, and on my way I'll do all I can to help him to get away. It won't be much use perhaps. It is most likely that he will only get away from this locality to be arrested in another, but all that one man can do to help him I will do; but you'll have to give me the promise first, and I'll trust you to keep it."

Ann said nothing. The immediate weight of agonised care for her father's life was lifted off her; but she had a strange feeling that the man who had taken her responsibility had taken upon him its suffering too in a deeper sense than she could understand. It flashed across her, not clearly but indistinctly, that the chief element in her suffering had been the shame of defying law and propriety rather than let her father undergo a just penalty. In some way or other this had been all transferred to Bart, and in the glimmering understanding of his character which was growing within her, she perceived that he had it in him to suffer under it far more intensely than she had suffered. It was very strange that just when she obtained the promise she wanted from him she would have been glad to set him free from it!

Within certain self-pleasing limits Ann had always been

a good-natured and generous person, and she experienced a strong impulse of this good nature and generosity just now, but it was only for a moment, and she stifled it as a thing that was quite absurd. Her father must be relieved, of course, from his horrid situation; and, after all, Bart could help him quite easily, more easily than any other man in the world could, and then come back and go on with his life as before. Questions of conscience had never, so far, clouded Ann's mental horizon. A moment's effort to regain her habitual standpoint made it quite clear to her that in this case it was she, she and Christa, who were making the sacrifice; a minute more, and she could almost have found it in her heart to grumble at the condition of the vow which she had so liberally sketched the night before, and only the fact that there was something about

Bart which she did not at all understand, and a fear that that something might be a propensity to withdraw from his engagement, made her submissively adhere to it.

"Christa and I will sign the pledge. We will give up dancing and wearing finery. We will stop being friends with worldly people, and we will go to church and meetings, and try to like them." Ann repeated her vow.

Bart took the pen and ink with which she chronicled her sales of beer and wrote the vow twice on two pages of his note-book; at the bottom he added, "God helping me." Ann signed them both, he keeping one and giving her the other.

This contract on Ann's part had many of the elements of faith in it—a wonderful audacity of faith in her own power to revolutionise her life and control her sister's, and all the unreasoning child-

likeness of faith which could launch itself boldly into an unknown future without any knowledge of what life would be like there.

On the part of Toyner the contract showed the power that certain habits of thought, although exercised only for a few months, had over him. Good people are fond of talk about the weakness of good habits compared with the strength of bad ones. But, given the same time to the formation of each, the habits which a man counts good must be stronger than those which he counts evil, because the inner belief of his mind is in unity with them. Toyner believed to-night that he was in open revolt against a rule of life which he had found himself unable to adhere to, and against the God who had ordained it; but, all the same, it was this rule, and faith in the God which he had approached by means of it, that

actuated him during this conference with Ann. As a man who had given up hope for himself might desire salvation for his child, so he gravely and gently set her feet in what he was accustomed to regard as the path of life before he himself left it.

THE

CHAPTER IX.

Ann's plan of the way in which Toyner more than any other man could aid her father was simple enough. He who was known to be in pursuit of Markham was to take him as a friend through the town at The Mills and start him on the road at the other side. Markham was little known at The Mills, and no one would be likely to take the companion of the constable to be the criminal for whose arrest he had been making so much agitation ; they were to travel at the early hour of dawn when few were stirring. This plan, with such modifications as his own good sense suggested, Toyner was willing to adopt.

He started earlier in the evening than she had done,

having no particular desire for secrecy. He told his friends that he was going to row to The Mills by night, and those who heard him supposed that he had gained some information concerning Markham that he thought it best to report. It was a calm night; the smoke of distant burning was still in the air.

He dropped down the river in the dark hours before the moonrise, and began to row with strength, as Ann had done, when he reached the placid water. His boat was light and well built. He could see a few yards of dark water in advance; he could see the dark outline of the trees. The water was deep; there were no rocks, no hidden banks; he did not make all the haste he could, but rowed on meditatively—he was always more or less attracted by solitude. To-night the mechanical exercise, the darkness, the absolute loneliness, were greater

rest to him than sleep would have been. In a despairing dull sort of way he was praying all the time; his mind had contracted a habit of prayer, at least if expressing his thoughts to the divine Being in the belief that they were heard may be called prayer.

Probably no one so old or so wise but that he will behave childishly if he can but feel himself exactly in the same relation to a superior being that a child feels to a grown man. Toyner expressed his grievance over and over again with childlike simplicity; he explained to God that he could not feel it to be right or fair that, when he had prayed so very much, and prayers of the sort to which a blessing was promised, he should be given over to the damning power of circumstance, launched in a career of backsliding, and made thereby, not only an object of greater scorn to all men than if he had never reformed, but actually,

as it appeared to him, more worthy of scorn.

He did not expect his complaints to be approved by the Deity, and gained therefore no satisfying sense that the prayer had ascended to heaven.

The moon arose, the night was very warm; into the aromatic haze a mist was arising from the water on all sides. It was not so thick but that he could see his path through it in the darkness; but when the light came he found a thin film of vapour between him and everything at which he looked. The light upon it was so great that it seemed to be luminous in itself, and it had a slightly magnifying power, so that distances looked greater, objects looked larger, and the wild desolate scene with which he was familiar had an aspect that was awful because so unfamiliar.

When Toyner realised what the full effect of the moonlight was going to be, he dropped

his oars and sat still for a few minutes, wondering if he would be able to find the landmarks that were necessary, so strange did the landscape look, so wonderful and gigantic were the shapes which the dead trees assumed. Then he continued his path, looking for a tree that was black and blasted by lightning. He was obliged to grope his way close to the trees; thus his boat bumped once or twice on hidden stumps. It occurred to him to think what a very lonely place it would be to die in, and a premonition that he was going to die came across him.

Having found the blasted tree, he counted four fallen trees; they came at intervals in the outer row of standing ones; then there was a break in the forest, and he turned his boat into it and paused to listen.

The sound that met his ear —almost the strangest sound that could have been heard in

that place—was that of human speech; it was still some distance away, but he heard a voice raised in angry excitement, supplicating, threatening, defying, and complaining.

Toyner began to row down the untried water-way which was opened to his boat. The idea that any one had found Markham in such a place and at such an hour was too extraordinary to be credited. Toyner looked eagerly into the mist. He could see nothing but queer-shaped gulfs of light between trunks and branches. Again his boat rubbed unexpectedly against a stump, and again the strange premonition of approaching death came over him. For a moment he thought that his wisest course would be to return. Then he decided to go forward; but before obeying this command, his mind gave one of those sudden self-attentive flashes the capacity for which marks off

the mind of the reflective type from others. He saw himself as he sat there, his whole appearance and dress; he took in his history, and the place to which that hour had brought him, he, Bart Toyner, a thin, somewhat drooping, middle-aged man, unsuccessful, because of his self-indulgence, in all that he had attempted, yet having carried about with him always high desires, which had never had the slightest realisation except in the one clear shining space of vision and victory which had been his for a few months and now was gone. The light had mocked him; now perhaps he was going to die!

He pushed his boat on, his sensations melting into an excited blank of thought in which curiosity was alone apparent. He was growing strangely excited after his long calm despondency; no doubt the excitement of the other, who was shouting and

jabbering not far away in the moonlit night, affected him.

He found his way through the trees of the opening; evidently the splash of his oar was caught by the owner of the noisy voice, for before he could see any one a silence succeeded to the noise, a sudden absolute silence, in itself shocking.

"Are you there, Markham?" cried Toyner.

No answer.

Toyner peered into the silver mist on all sides of him; the sensation of the diffused moonlight was almost dazzling, the trees looked far away, large and unreal. At length among them he saw the great log that had fallen almost horizontal with the water; upon it a solitary human figure stood erect in an attitude of frenzied defiance.

"I have come from your daughter, Markham." Then

in a moment, by way of self-explanation, he said, "Toyner."

The man addressed only flung a clenched fist into the air. The silence of his pantomime now that there was some one to speak to was made ghastly by the harangue which he had been pouring out upon the solitude.

"Have you lost your head?" asked Toyner. "I have came from your daughter—I'm not going to arrest you, but set you down at The Mills—you can go where you will then."

He knew now the answer to his first question. The man before him was in some stage of delirium. Toyner wondered if any one could secretly have brought him drink.

There was nothing to be done but to soothe as best he could the other's fear and enmity, and to bring the boat close to the tree for him to get in it. Whether he was

sane or mad, it was clearly necessary to take him from that place. Markham retained a sullen silence, but seemed to understand so far that he ceased all threatening gestures. His only movements were certain turnings and sudden crouchings as if he saw or felt enemies about him in the air.

"Now, get in," said Toyner. He had secured the boat. He pulled the other by the legs, and guided him as he slipped from his low bench. "Sit down; you can't stand, you know."

But Markham showed himself able to keep his balance, and alert to help in pushing off the boat. There was a heavy boat-pole ready for use in shallow water, and Markham for a minute handled it adroitly, pushing off from his tree.

Toyner turned his head perforce to see that the boat was not proceeding towards

some other dangerous obstacle. Then Markham, with the sudden swift cunning of madness, lifted the butt end of his pole and struck him on the head.

Toyner sank beneath the blow as an ox shivers and sinks under the well-aimed blow of the butcher.

Markham looked about him for a moment with an air of childish triumph, looked not alone at the form of the fallen man before him, but all around in the air, as if he had triumphed not over one, but over many.

No eye was there to see the look of fiendish revenge that flitted next over the nervous working of his face. Then he fell quickly to work changing garments with the limp helpless body lying in the bottom of the boat. With unnatural strength he lifted Toyner, dressed in his own coat and hat, to the horizontal log on which he

had lived for so long. He took the long mesh of woollen sheeting that his daughter had brought to be a rest and support to his own body, and with it he tied Toyner to the upright tree against which the log was lying; then, with an additional touch of fiendish satire, he took a bit of dry bread out of the ample bag of food which Ann had hung there for his own needs, and laid it on Toyner's knees. Having done all this he pushed his boat away with reckless rapidity, and rowed it back into the open water, steering with that unerring speed by which a somnambulist is often seen to perform a dangerous feat.

The moonlit mist and the silence of night closed around this lonely nook in the dead forest and Toyner's form sitting upon the fallen log. In the open river, where no line determined the meeting of the placid moonlit water and

the still, moonlit mist, the boat dashed like a dark streak up the white winding Ahwewee toward the green forest around Fentown Falls. The small dark figure of the man within it was working at his oars with a strength and regularity of some powerful automaton. At every stroke the prow shot forward, and the sound of the splashing oars made soft echoes far and wide.

CHAPTER X.

When men have visions the impression left upon their minds is that light from the unseen world of light has in some way broken through into the sphere of their cognizance. The race in its ages of reflection has upon the whole come to the conclusion that that which actually takes place is the gradual growth and the sudden breaking forth of light within the mysterious depths of the man himself. A new explanation of a fact does not do away with the fact.

Toyner was not dead, he was stunned; his head was badly injured. When his consciousness returned, and through what process of inflammation and fever his wounded head went in the struggle of nature toward

recovery, was never clearly known. His body, bound with the soft torn cloths to the upright tree, sagged more and more until it found a rest upon the inclined log. The fresh sweet air from pine woods, the cool vapours from the water beneath him, were nurses of wise and delicate touch. The sun arose and shone warmly, yet not hotly, through the air in which dry haze was thickening. The dead trees stood in the calm water, keeping silence as it were, a hundred stalwart guards with fingers at their lips, lest any sound should disturb the life that, with beneficent patience, was little by little restoring the wounded body from within. Even the little vulgar puffing market-boat that twice a day passed the windings of the old river channel—the only disturber of solitude—was kept at so great a distance by this guard of silent trees that no perception of her

passing, and all the life and perplexity of which she must remind him, entered into Toyner's half-closed avenues of sense.

For two days the sun rose on Bart through the mellow, smoke-dimmed atmosphere. Each night it lay in a red cloud for an hour in the west, tingeing and dyeing all the mirror below the trees with red. No one was there in the desolate lake to see the twice-told glory of that rosy flood and firmament, unless it was this wondrous light that first penetrated the eyes of the prisoner with soothing brightness.

It was at some hour of light —sunset or sunrise, or it might have been in the blending of the mornings and the evenings in that confusion of mind which takes no heed of time— that Toyner first began to know himself. Then it was not of himself that he took knowledge ; his heart in its waking

felt after something else around and beneath and above him, everywhere, something that meant light and comfort and rest and love, something that was very strong, that was strength; he himself, Bart Toyner, was part of this strength, and rested in it with a rest and refreshing which is impossible to weakness, however much it may crave.

It came to him as he lay there, not knowing the where or when of his knowledge—it came to him that he had made a great mistake, as a little child makes a mistake in laughable ignorance. Indeed, he laughed within himself as he thought what a strange, childish, grotesque notion he had had,—he had thought, he had actually thought, that God was only a part of things; that he, Bart Toyner, could turn away from God; that God's power was only with him when he supposed himself to be obedient to Him! Yes, he

had thought this; but now he knew that God was all and in all.

There came to him, trooping with this new joy of knowledge, the sensuous sight and sound and smell of many things that he had known, but had not understood, before. All the spring-times through which he had walked unconscious of their meaning, came to him. There was a sound in his ears of delicate flowers springing to light through dewy moss, of buds bursting, and he saw the glancing of myriad tiny leaves upon the grey old trees. With precisely the same sense of sweetness came the vision of days when autumn rain was falling, and the red and sear leaf, the nut, the pine-cone and the flower-seed were dropping into the cold wet earth. Was life in the spring, and death in the autumn? Was the power and love of God not resting in the damp

fallen things that lay rotting in the ground?

There came before him a troop of the little children of Fentown, all the rosy-cheeked faces and laughing eyes and lithe little dancing forms that he had ever taken the trouble to notice; and Ann and Christa came and stood with them — Christa with her dancing finery, with her beautiful, thoughtless, unemotional face, her yellow hair, and soft white hands; and Ann, a thousand times more beautiful to him, with her sun-brown tints and hazel eyes, so full of energy and forethought, her dark neat hair and working-dress and hardened hands—this was beauty! Over against it he saw Markham, blear-eyed, unkempt and dirty; and his own father, a gaunt, idiotic wreck of respectable manhood; and his mother, faded, worn, and peevish; with them stood the hunch-backed baker of Fentown and

all the coarse and ugly sons of toil that frequented its wharfs. There was not a child or a maiden among those he saw first who did not owe their life to one of these. With the children and the maidens there were pleasure and hope; with the older men and women there were effort and failure, sin and despair. The life that was in all of them, was it partly of God and partly of themselves? He laughed again at the question. The life that was in them all was all of God, every impulse, every act. The energy that thrilled them through, by which they acted, if only as brutes act, by which they spoke, if only to lie, by which they thought and felt, even when thought and feeling were false and bad, the energy which upheld them was all of God. That devil, too, that he saw standing close by and whispering to them—his form was dim and fading; he was

not sure whether he was a reality or a thought, but—if he had life, was it his own? Somewhere, he could not remember where or when, he had heard the voice of truth saying, "Thou couldst have no power against me except it were given thee from above."

The strange complexity of dreams, which seems so foolish, brings them nearer to reality than we suppose, for there is nothing real which has not manifold meanings. Before this vision of his townspeople faded, Bart saw Ann slowly walk over from the group in which she had risen to be a queen, to that group whose members were worn with disappointment and age; as she went he saw her perfectly as he had never seen her before, the hard shallow thoughts that were woven in with her unremitting effort to do always the thing that she had set herself to do; and he saw, too, a nature that was beneath this

outer range of activity, a small trembling fountain of feeling suppressed and shut from the light. In some strange way as she stood, having grown older by transition from one group to the other, he saw that this inner fountain of strength was increasing and overflowing all that other part which had before made up almost the entire personality of the woman. This change did not take place visibly in the other people among whom she stood. It was in Ann he saw the change. He felt very glad he had seen this; he seemed to think of nothing else for a long time.

He forgot then all the detail of that which he had seen and thought, and it seemed to him that he spent a long time just rejoicing in the divine life by which all things were, and by which they changed, growing by transformation into a glory which was still indistinct to him, too far off to be seen in any

way except that its light came as the light comes from stars which we say we see and have never really seen at all.

Through this joy and light the details of life began to show again. The two forces which he had always supposed had moulded his life acted his early scenes over again. His young mother, before the shadow of despair had come over her, was seen waiting upon all his boyish footsteps with cheerful love and patience, trying to guide and to help, but trying much more to comfort and to please; and his father, with a strong body and the strength of fixed opinion and formed habits, having no desire for his son except to train and form him as he himself was trained and formed, was seen darkening all the boy's happiness with unreasonable severity, which hardened and sharpened with the opposition of years into selfish cruelty. Toyner had

often seen these scenes before; all that was new to him now was that they stood in the vivid light of a new interpretation. Ah! the father's cruelty, the irritable self-love, the incapacity to recognise any form of life but his own, it was of God,—not a high manifestation: the bat is lower than the bird, and yet it is of God. Bart saw now the one great opportunity of life! He saw that the whole of the universe goes to develop character, and the one chief heavenly food set within reach of the growing character for its nourishment is the opportunity to embrace malice with love, to gather it in the arms of patience, convert its shame into glory by willing endurance.

Had he, Bart Toyner, then really been given the power in that beginning of life to put out his hand and take this fruit which would have given him such great strength and stature, or had he only had

strength just for what he had done and nothing more?

The answer seemed to come to him from all that he had read of the growth of things. He looked into the forests, into the life of the creatures that now lived in them; he saw the fish in the rivers and the birds in the air, everywhere now roots were feeling under the dark ground for just the food that was needed, and the birds flew open-mouthed, and the fishes darted here and there, and the squirrels hoarded their nuts. Everywhere in the past the growth of ages had been bringing together these creatures and their food by slowly developing in them new powers to assimilate new foods. What then of those that pined and dwindled when the organism was not quite strong enough and the old food was taken away? Ah, well! they fell—fell as the sparrows fall, not one of them without God. And what of

man rising through ages from beast to sainthood, rising from the mere dominion of physical law which works out its own obedience into the moral region, where a perpetual choice is ordained of God, and the consequences of each choice ordained? Was not the lower choice often inevitable? Who could tell when or where except God Himself? And the higher choice the only food by which character can grow! So men must often fall. Fall to what end? To pass into that boundless gulf of distant light into which everything is passing, passing straight by the assimilation of its proper food, circuitously by weakness and failure, but still coming, growing, reaching out into infinite light, for all is of God, and God is Love.

All Toyner's thought and sense seemed to lose hold again of everything but that first realisation of the surrounding glory and joy and strength, and the

feeling that he himself had to rest for a little while before any new thing was given him to do.

His body lay back upon the grey lifeless branch, wrapped in the ragged, soiled garment that Markham had put upon him; the silence of night came again over the water and the grey dead trees, and nature went on steadily and quietly with her work of healing.

CHAPTER XI.

When Toyner had left Fentown to go and rescue Markham, Ann had stood a good way off upon the dark shore just to satisfy herself that he had got into the boat and rowed down the river. This was not an indication that she doubted him. She followed him unseen because she felt that night that there were elements in his conduct which she did not in the least understand. When he was gone, she went back to fulfil her part of the contract, and she had a strength of purpose in fulfilling it which did not belong mainly to the obligation of her promise. Something in his look when he had come in this evening, in his glance as he bade her farewell, made her eager to fulfil it.

All night, asleep or awake, she was more or less haunted with this new feeling for Toyner—a feeling which did not in her mind resemble love or liking, which would have been perhaps best translated by the word "reverence," but that was not a word in Ann's vocabulary, not even an idea in her mental horizon.

Our greatest gains begin to be a fact in the soul before we have any mental conception of them!

The next day Ann was up early. She took her beer (it was home-brewed and not of great value) and deliberately poured it out, bottle after bottle, into a large puddle in the front road. The men who were passing early saw her action, and she told them that she had "turned temp'rance." She washed the bottles, and set them upside down before the house to dry where all the world might see

them. The sign by which she had advertised her beer and its price had been nothing but a sheet of brown paper with letters painted in irregular brush strokes. Ann had plenty of paper. This morning she laid a sheet upon her table, and rapidly painted thereon with her brush such advertisements as these:

Tea and Coffee, 3 Cents a Cup.
Ginger Bread, Baked Beans,
Lemonade.

Cooking done to order at any hour
and in any style.

By the time this placard was up, Christa had sauntered out to smell the morning air, and she looked at it with what was for Christa quite an exertion of surprise.

She went in to where Ann was scrubbing the tables. Christa never scrubbed except when it was necessary from Ann's point of view that she should, but she never inter-

fered either. Now she only said:

"Ann!"

"I'm here; I suppose you can see me."

"Yes; but, Ann——"

It was so unusual for Christa to feel even a strong emotion of surprise that she did not know in the least how to express it.

Ann stopped scrubbing. She had never supposed that Christa would yield easily to all the terms of the condition; she had not sufficient confidence in her to explain the truth concerning the secret compact.

"Look here, Christa, do you know that Walker died last night? Now I'll tell you what it is; you needn't think that the people who are respectable but not religious will have anything more to do with us, even in the offhand way that they've had to do with us before now. Father's settled all that for

us. Now the only thing we've got to do is to turn religious. We're going to be temp'rance, and never touch a game of cards. You're going to wear plain black clothes and not dance any more. It wouldn't be respectable any way, seeing they may catch father any day, and the least we can do is sort of to go into mourning."

Christa stood bright and beautiful as a child of the morning, and heard the sentence of this long night passed upon her; but instead of looking plaintive, a curiously hard look of necessary acquiescence came about the lines of her cherry lips. Ann was startled by it; she had expected Christa to bemoan herself, and in this look she recognised that the younger sister had an element of character like her own, was perhaps growing to be what she had become. The quality

that she honestly admired in herself appeared disgusting to her in pretty Christa, yet she went on to persuade and explain; it was necessary.

"We can't dance, Christa, for no one would dance with us; we can't wear flowers in our hats, for no one would admire them. I suppose you have the sense to see that? The men that come here are a pretty easy-going rough lot, but they draw a line somewhere. Now I've kept you like a lady so far, and I'll go on doing that to the end" (This was Ann's paraphrase for respectability); "so if you don't want to sit at home and mope, we've got to go in for being religious and go to church and meetings. The minister will come to see us, and all that sort will take to speaking to us, and I'll get you into Sunday school. There are several very good-looking fellows that go there, and there's a class of real big

girls taught by a Young-Men's-Christian-Association chap. He'd come to see you, you know, if you were in his class."

Christa was perfectly consoled, perfectly satisfied; she even showed her sister some of the animation which had hitherto come to her only when she was flirting with men.

"Ann," she said earnestly, "you are very splendid. I got up thinking there weren't no good in living at all."

Ann eyed her sharply. Was one set of actions the same to Christa as another? and was she content to forget all their own shame and all her father's wretched plight if she could only have a few pleasures for herself? It was exactly the passive state that she had desired to evoke in Christa; but there are many spectres that come to our call and then appal us with their presence!

Ann went on with her

work. She was not in the habit of indulging herself in moods or reveries; still, within her grew a silent disapproval of Christa. She felt herself superior to her. After a while another thought came upon her with unexpected force. Christa's motive for taking to the religious life was only self-interest; her own motive was the same; and was not that the motive which she really supposed hitherto to actuate all religious people? Had she not, for instance, been fully convinced that self-interest was the sum and substance of Bart Toyner's religion? Now between Bart Toyner and Christa and herself she felt that a great gulf was fixed.

Well, she did not know; she did not understand; she was not at all sure that she wanted to understand anything more about Bart Toyner and all the complex considerations about life which the thought of him seemed to arouse in

her. She felt that the best way of ridding herself of uncomfortable thoughts about him was to be busy in performing all that he could reasonably require at her hands. It is just in the same way that many people rid themselves of thoughts about God.

All that long day, while the sunlight fell pink through the haze, Ann worked at renovating her own life and Christa's. She took Christa and went to some girls of their acquaintance, and presented them with all the feathers, furbelows, and artificials which she and Christa possessed. She cooked some of the viands which she had advertised for sale, and prepared all her small stock of kitchen utensils for the new avocation. It was a long hard day's work, and before it was over the village was ringing with the news of all this change. The minister had already called on Ann and

Christa, saying suitable things concerning their father's terrible crime and their own sad position. When he was gone Christa laughed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE sweet-scented smoke of the distant forest fires had diffused itself all day in the atmosphere more and more palpably. It was not a gloomy effect, and familiar to eyes accustomed to the Canadian August. All the sunbeams were very pink, and they fell flickering among the shadows of the pear tree upon Markham's grey wooden house, upon the path and the ragged green in front. Ann had pleasant associations with these pink beams because they told of fine weather. Smoke will not lie thus in an atmosphere that is molested with any currents of wind that might bring cloud or storm. On the whole Ann had spent the day happily, for fair weather has much to do with happiness; but when that

unusual flood of blood-red light came at sunset, giving an unearthly look to a land which was well enough accustomed to bright sunsets of a more ordinary sort, Ann's courage and good humour failed her; she yielded to the common influence of marvels and felt afraid.

What had she done, and what was she going to do? She was playing with religion; and religion, if it was nothing more, was something which had made Bart Toyner look at her with such a strange smile of selfless hope and desire—hope that she would be something different from what she had been, desire that the best should come to her whatever was going to happen to him. That was the explanation of what had seemed inexplicable in his look (she felt glad to have worked it out at last); and if anything so strange as that were possible in Bart, what was the force

with which she was playing? Would some judgment befall her?

The evening closed in. Christa went to bed to finish a yellow-backed novel. As it was the last she was to read for a long time, she thought she might as well enjoy it. Ann sat alone in the outer room. The night was very still. Christa went to sleep, but Ann continued to sit, stitching at the very plain garb that Christa was to don on the morrow, not so much because she needed to work as because she felt no need of sleep. The night being close and warm, her window, a small French casement, stood open. At a late hour, when passers upon the road were few, arrested by some sound, she knew not what, she lifted her head and looked through the open window intently, in the same way as we lift our eyes and look sometimes just because another, a stranger

perhaps, has riveted his gaze upon us.

A moment more, and Ann saw some one come within the beams of her own lamp outside of the window; the figure crossed like a dark, silent shadow, but Ann thought she recognised Toyner. The outline of the clothes that he had worn when she had seen him last just about this hour on the previous night was unconsciously impressed upon her mind. A shudder of fear came over her, and then she was astonished at the fear; he might easily have done all that she had given him to do and returned by this time. Yet why did he pass the window in that ghostly fashion and show no sign of coming to the door? A moment or two that she sat seemed beaten out into the length and width of minutes by the throbbing of her nerves, usually so steady. She determined to steel herself against discomfort. If

Toyner had done his work and come home and did not think it wise to visit her openly, what was there to alarm in that? Yet she remembered that Toyner had spoken of being away for some indefinite length of time. She had not understood why last night, and now it seemed even more hard to understand.

As she sewed she found herself looking up moment by moment at the window. It was not long before she saw the same figure there again, close now, and in the full light. Her hands dropped nerveless upon her knee; she sat gazing with strained whitened face. The outline of the clothes she associated with the thought of Toyner, but from under the dark hat her father's face looked at her. Not the face of a man she thought, but the face of a spirit, as white as if it were lifeless, as haggard as if it were dead, but with blazing life in the eyeballs and a line

like red fire round their rims. In a moment it was gone again.

Ann started up possessed with the desire to prove the ghostly visitant material; passing through the door, she fled outside with her lamp. Whatever had been there had withdrawn itself more quickly than she had come to seek it.

She felt convinced now that her father was dead ; she fell to imagining all the ways in which the tragic end might have come. No thought that came to her was satisfactory. What had Bart done ? Why had his form seemed to her so inextricably confused with the form of her father at the moment of the apparition? The recognition of a man or his garments, although the result of observation, does not usually carry with it any consciousness of the details that we have observed ; and she did not know now what it was that

had made her think of Toyner so strongly.

The next morning, as the day was beginning to wear on, one of the Fentown men put his head into Ann's door.

"Do you happen to know where Toyner is?" he asked.

She gave a negative, only to be obliged to repeat it to several questions in quick succession.

"Seen him this morning?"

"Seen him last night?"

"Happen to know where he would likely be?"

The growing feeling of distress in Ann's mind made the shake of her head more and more emphatic. She was of course an object of more or less pity to every one at that time, and the intruder made an explanation that had some tone of apology.

"Oh, well, I didn't know but as you might have happened to have seen him since he came back. His boat's there at the landing all right, but

his mother's not seen him up to the house."

During the day Ann heard the same tale in several different forms. Toyner was one of those quiet men not often in request by his neighbours; and as he was known at present to have reason possibly for hidden movements in search of his quarry, there was not that hue and cry raised concerning the presence of the boat and the absence of the owner that would have been aroused in the case of some other; still, the interest in his whereabouts gradually grew, and Ann heard the talk about it. Within her own heart an unexpressed terror grew stronger and stronger. It was founded upon the sense of personal responsibility. She alone knew the secret mission upon which Toyner had left; she alone knew of the glimpse of her father which she had caught the night before, and she doubted now whether she had seen a spirit or visible

man. What had happened in the dark hour in which Toyner and Markham had met, and which of them had brought back the boat? The misery of these questions grew to be greater than she could endure; but to confide her distress to any one was impossible. To do so might not only be to put her father's enemies upon his track, but it would be to confess Bart's unfaithfulness to his public duty; and in that curious revolution of feeling which so frequently comes about in hearts where it is least expected, Ann felt the latter would be the more intolerable woe of the two.

Then came another of those strange unearthly sunsets. Ann's mind was made up. Inactivity she could endure no longer. There was one explanation that appeared to her more reasonable than any other; that was, that Bart had wavered in his resolution to relieve Markham, that the

latter had died upon the tree where he was hiding, and that Bart would not show himself for the present where Ann could see him. Ann did not believe in this explanation; but because of the apparition which she thought she had seen, because of the horrible nature of the fear it entailed, she determined that, come what would, she would go to that secret place which she alone knew and find out if her father had been taken from it or if any trace remained there to show what had really happened. It was when the sisters were again alone for the night that she first broke the silence of her fears.

"Christa, father came to the window last night, but went away again before I could catch him."

"Sure he would never show his face in this place, Ann. You must have been dreaming!"

"Well, I must try to find

him. I tell you what I'm going to do. I've been along all the boats, and there's not one of them I could take without being heard except David Brown's canoe that is tied at the foot of his father's field. I could get that, and I expect to be back here long before it's light. If any one should come to the door asking for me, you say, like the other night, that I'm ill and can't see them."

"Yes," said Christa, without exhibiting much interest. Ann had been the *deus ex machina* of the house since Christa's babyhood. It never occurred to her that any power needed to interfere on behalf of Ann.

"But if I shouldn't get back by daylight, you'll have to manage to say a word to David Brown. Tell him that I borrowed his canoe for a very special purpose. If you just say that, he'll have sense not to make a fuss."

"Yes," said Christa sleepily.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE canoe did not answer to Ann's one slim Indian paddle so lightly as the boat she had taken before had answered to the oars. Kneeling upright in the stern, she was obliged to keep her body in perfect balance.

The moon did not rise now until late, but the smoke that had for two days hung so still and dim had been lifted on a light breeze that came with the darkness. The stars were clear above, and Ann's eyes were well accustomed to the wood and stream.

Ah! how long it seemed before she came round the bend of the river and down to the blasted tree. She felt a repulsion for the whole death-like place to-night that she had not felt before. She

had been sure the other night of meeting some one at the end of her secret journey, and now the best she could hope was that the place would be empty; and even if it were empty, perhaps, for all she knew, one of the men for whom she was seeking might be lying dead in the water beneath. Certainly the inexplicable appearance of her father the night before had shaken her nerves. Ann was doing a braver thing than she had ever done in her life, because she was a prey to terror. Lonely as the desolate Ahwewee was, to turn from it into the windings of the secret opening seemed like leaving the world behind and going alone into a region of death. There was no sound but the splash of paddle, the ripple of the still water under the canoe, the occasional voice of a frog from the swampy edges of the lake, and the shrill murmur of crickets from the dry fields beyond.

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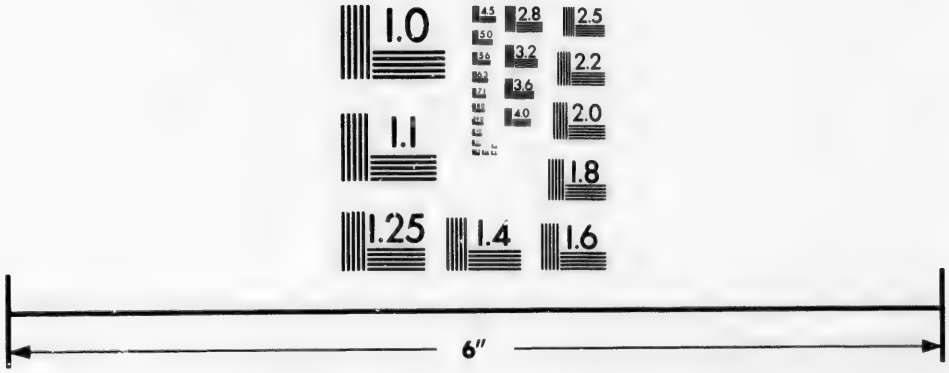

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When Ann came near she saw the bound figure reclining in the arms of the fallen tree. Then she believed that her worst fear had been true—that Bart had been unfaithful, and that her father had died in this wretched place. He must be dead because she had seen his spirit!

She came nearer. He had not died of starvation; the bag of food which she had hung upon the branch hung there yet. She set the canoe close against the tree, and, holding by the tree, raised herself in it. She had to be very careful lest the canoe should tip under her even while she held by the tree. Then she put forth a brave hand, and laid it upon the breast of the unconscious man.

He was not dead. The heart was beating, though not strongly; the body was warm.

"Father, father." She shook him gently.

The answer was a groan,

very feeble. It told her at once that the man before her was stricken with some physical ill that made him incapable of responding to her.

And now what was she to do? It was necessary by some means to get her father into the canoe. To that she did not give a second thought, but while he still lived it seemed to her monstrous to take him either back to Fentown Falls or down to The Mills. Her horror of prison and of judgment for him had grown to be wholly morbid and unreasonable, just because his terror of it had been so extreme. Only one course remained. She had the chart that David Brown had given her. He had told her that at that northern edge of the swamp, which could be reached by the way he had marked out, a small farmhouse stood. Possibly the people in this house might not yet have heard of Markham the

m rderer ; or possibly, if they had heard, they might be won for pity's sake to let him regain strength there and go in peace. It was her only chance. The moon was rising now, and she would find the way. She felt strength to do anything when she had realised that the heart beneath her hand was still beating.

Ann moved the canoe under the fallen log, and moving down it upon her knees, she took the rope from the prow, secured it round the log from which the sick man must descend, and fastened it again to the other end of the boat. This at least was a guarantee that they could not all sink together. Even yet the danger of upsetting the canoe sideways was very great. It was only necessity that enabled her to accomplish her task.

"Father, rouse yourself a little." She took Markham's old felt hat, upon which the

insensible head was lying, and set it warmly over his brow. She unfastened the bands that tied his body to the log. She had not come without a small phial of the rum that was always necessary for her father, in the hope that she might find him alive. She soaked some morsels of bread in this, and put it in the mouth of the man over whom she was working. It was very dark; the only marvel was, not that she did not recognise Toyner, but that she and he were not both engulfed in the black flood beneath them in the struggle which she made to take him in the canoe.

Twice that day Toyner had stirred and become conscious; but consciousness, except that of confused dreams, had again deserted him. The lack of food, if it had preserved him from fever, had caused the utmost weakness of all his bodily powers; yet when the small amount of bread and

rum which he could swallow gave him a little strength, he was roused, not to the extent of knowing who he was or where, but enough to move his muscles, although feebly, under direction. After a long time she had him safely in the bottom of the canoe, his head lying upon her jacket which she had folded for a pillow. At first, as she began to paddle the canoe forward, he groaned again and again, but by degrees the reaction of weakness after exertion made him lapse into his former state that seemed like sleep.

Ann had lost now all her fears of unknown and unseen dangers. All that she feared was the loss of her way, or the upsetting of her boat. The strength that she put into the strokes of her paddle was marvellous. She had just a mile to go before she came to another place where a stretch of still water opened through the trees. There were several

of these blind channels opening off the bed of the Ahwewee. They were the terror of those who were travelling in boats, for they were easily mistaken for the river itself, and they led to nothing but impenetrable marsh. From this particular inlet David Brown had discovered a passage to the land, and Ann pursued the new untried way boldly. Somewhere farther on David had told her a little creek flowed in where the eye could not discern any wider opening than was constantly the case between the drowned trees. Its effect upon the current of the water was said to be so slight that the only way to discover where it ran was by throwing some light particles upon the water and watching to see whether they drifted outwards from the wood steadily. She turned the boat gently against a broken stump from which she could take a decaying fragment. An hour passed. She wearily

crossed the water to and fro, casting out her chips of punk, straining her eyes to see their motion in the moonlight. The breeze that had moved the smoke had gone again. Above the moon rode through white fleecy clouds. The water and air lay still and warm, interpenetrated with the white light. The trees, without leaf or twigs, cast no shadow with the moon in the zenith.

The patient experimenting with the chips was a terrible ordeal to Ann. The man whom she supposed to be her father lay almost the whole length of the canoe so close to her, and yet she could not pass his outstretched feet to give him food or stimulant. At last, at last, to her great joy, she found the place where the chips floated outward with steady motion. She then pushed her canoe in among the trees, thankful to know that it, at least, had been there before, that there would be no pass

too narrow for it. The canoe itself was almost like a living creature to her by this time. Like an intelligent companion in the search, it responded with gentle motion to her slightest touch.

It seemed to Ann that the light of the moon was now growing very strong and clear. Surely no moon had ever before become so bright! Ann looked about her, almost for a moment dreading some supernatural thing, and then she realised that the night was gone, that pale dawn was actually smiling upon her. It gave her a strange sense of lightheartedness. Her heart warmed with love to the sight of the purple tint in the eastern sky, that bluish purple which precedes the yellow sunrise. On either side of her boat now the water was so shallow that sedge and rushes rose above it.

The herons flapped across her path to their morning fishing.

The creek still made a nar-

row channel for the canoe. Pretty soon its current flowed between wild undulating tracts of bright green moss in which the trees still stood dead, but bark and lichen now adhered to their trunks, and a few more strokes brought her to the fringes of young spruce and balsam that grew upon the drier knolls. She smelt living trees, dry woods and pastures in front. Then a turn of the narrow creek, and she saw a log-house standing not twenty paces from the stream. Above and around it maples and elms held out green branches, and there was some sort of a clearing farther on.

Ann felt exultant in her triumph. She had brought her boat to a place of safety. She seemed to gather life and strength from the sun; although it still lay below the blue horizon of lake and forest which she had left behind her, the sky above was a gulf of sunshine.

She stepped out of the boat and pushed away the hat to look in her father's face. She saw now who it was that she had rescued. Toyner stirred a little when she touched him, and opened his eyes, the same grave grey eyes with which he had looked at her when he bade her good-bye. There was no fever in them, and, as it seemed to her, no lack of sense and thought. Yet he only looked at her gravely, and then seemed to sleep again.

The girl sprang upright upon the bank and wrung her hands together. It came to her with sudden clearness what had been done. Had Toyner told his tale, she could hardly have known it more clearly. Her father had tried to murder Bart; her father had tied him in his own place; it was her father who had escaped alone with the boat. It was he himself, and no apparition, who had peered in upon her

through the window. She was wrought up into a strong glow of indignation against the baseness that would turn upon a deliverer, against the cruelty of the revenge taken. No wonder that miserable father had not dared to enter her house again or to seek further succour from her! All her pity, all the strength of her generosity, went out to the man who had ventured so much on his behalf and been betrayed. That unspoken reverence for Toyner, a sense of the contrast between him and her father and the other men whom she knew, which had been growing upon her, now culminated in an impulse of devotion. A new faculty opened within her nature, a new mine of wealth.

The thin white-faced man that lay half dead in the bottom of the canoe perhaps experienced some reviving influence from this new energy of love that had transformed

the woman who stood near him, for he opened his eyes again and saw her, this time quite distinctly, standing looking down upon him. There was tenderness in her eyes, and her sunbrowned face was all aglow with a flush that was brighter than the flush of physical exercise. About her bending figure grew what seemed to Bart's half-dazzled sense the flowers of paradise, for wild sunflowers and sheafs of purple eupatorium brushed her arms, standing in high phalanx by the edge of the creek. Bart smiled as he looked, but he had no thoughts, and all that he felt was summed up in a word that he uttered gently :

"Ann!"

She knelt down at once. "What is it, Bart?" and again : "What were you trying to say?"

It is probable that her words did not reach him at all. He was only half-way back from

the region of his vision; but he opened his eyes and looked at her again.

The sun rose, and a level golden beam struck through between the trunks of the trees, touching the flowers and branches here and there with moving lights, and giving all the air a brighter, mellower tint. There was something that Bart did feel a desire to say—a great thought that at another time he might have tried in a multitude of words to have expressed and failed. He saw Ann, whom he loved, and the paradise about her; he wanted to bring the new knowledge that had come to him in the light of his vision to bear upon her who belonged now to the region of outward not of inward sight and yet was part of what must always be to him everlasting reality.

"What were you going to say, Bart?" she asked again tenderly.

And again he summed up

all that he thought and felt in one word :

"God."

"Yes, Bart," she said, with some sudden intuitive sense of agreement.

Then, seeming to be satisfied, he closed his eyes and went back into the state of drowsiness.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ann went up to the house. It was a great relief to her to remember that the man for whom she was going to ask help was no criminal. She could hold up her head and speak boldly.

Another minute and she began to look curiously to see how long the grass and weeds had grown before the door. It was some months since David Brown had been here. The doubt which had entered Ann's mind grew swiftly. She knocked loudly upon the door and upon the wooden shutters of the windows. The knocks echoed through empty rooms.

She had no hesitation in house-breaking. In a shed at the back she found a broken spade which formed a suffi-

ciently strong and sharp lever for her purpose. She pried open a shutter and climbed in. She found only such furniture as was necessary for a temporary abode. A small iron stove, a few utensils of tin, a huge sack which had been used for a straw bed, and a few articles of wooden furniture, were all that was to be seen.

Upon the canvas sack she seized eagerly. Bart might be dying, or he might be recovering from some injury; in either case she had only one desire, and that was to procure for him the necessary comforts. Having no access to hay or straw, she began rapidly to gather the bracken which was standing two and three feet high in great quantities wherever the ground was dry under the trees. She worked with a nervous strength that was extraordinary, even to herself, after the toilsome night. When she had filled

the sack, she put it upon the floor of the lower room and went back to the canoe. She saw that Bart had roused himself and was sitting up. He was even holding on to the rushes with his hand—an act which she thought showed the dreamy state of his mind, for she did not notice that the rope had come undone. She helped Bart out of the canoe, putting her arm strongly round him so that he was able to walk. She saw that he had not his mind yet; he said no word about the help she gave him; he walked as a sleeping man might walk. When she laid him down upon the bed of bracken and arranged his head upon the thicker part which she had heaped for a pillow, he seemed to her to fall asleep almost at once; and yet, for fear that his strange condition was not sleep, she hastily opened the bag of food and the flask of rum.

She stripped the twigs from a tiny spruce tree, piling them inside the old stove. When they had cracked and blazed with a fierce, sudden heat, Ann could only break bread-crumbs into a cupful of boiling water and put a few drops of rum in it. She woke Bart and fed him as she might have fed a baby. When he lay down again exhausted, with that strange moan which he always gave when he first put back his head, she had the comfort of believing that a better colour came to his cheek than before. She resolved that if he rested quietly for a few hours and appeared better after the next food she gave him, she would think it safe to cushion the canoe with bracken and take him home. This thought suggested to her to moor the canoe.

She went down to the creek again, but it was too late. The water running gently and

steadily had done its work, taken the canoe out from among the rushes, and floated it down between the mosses of the swamp. Making her feet bare, she sprang from one clump of fern root to another, sometimes missing her footing and striking to her knees through the green moss that let her feet easily break into the black wet earth. In a few minutes she could see the canoe. It had drifted just beyond the swamp, where all the ground was lying under some feet of water; but there a tree had turned its course out of the current of the creek, so that it was now sidling against two ash trees, steady as if at anchor. So few feet as it was from her, Ann saw at a glance that to reach it was quite impossible. Realising the helplessness of her position without this canoe, she might have been ready to brave the dangers of a struggle in deep water to obtain it, but the

danger was that of sinking in bottomless mud. The canoe was wholly beyond her reach. Retracing her steps, she washed her feet in the running creek, and, as she put on her shoes, sitting upon the grassy bank in the morning sunlight, she felt drowsily as if she must rest there for a few minutes. She let her head fall upon the arm she had outstretched on the warm sod.

When she stirred again she had that curious feeling of inexplicable lapse of time that comes to us after unexpected and profound slumber. The sun had already passed the zenith ; the tone in the voices of the crickets, the whole colouring of earth and sky, told her, before she had made any exact observation of the shadows, that it was afternoon.

She prepared more food for the sick man. When she had fed him and put him to rest again, she went out to discover what means of egress by land

was to be found from this lonely dwelling. She followed the faint trace of wheel-ruts over the grass, which for a short distance ran through undergrowth of fir and weeds. She came out upon a cleared space of some acres, from which a fine crop of hay had clearly been taken, apparently about a month before. Whoever had mowed the hay had evidently been engaged also in a further clearing of the land beyond, and there was a small patch where tomatoes and pea vines lay neglected in the sun; the peas had been gathered weeks before, but the tomatoes, later in ripening, hung there turning rich and red. Ann went on across the cleared space. Following the track, she came to a thick bit of bush beyond, where a long cutting had been made, just wide enough for a cart to pass through.

There was no other way out; Ann must walk through

this long green passage. No knight in a fairy tale ever entered path that looked more remote from the world's thoroughfares. When she had walked a mile she came to an opening where the ground dipped all round to a bottom which had evidently at some time held water, for the flame-weed that grew thick upon it stood even, the tops of its magenta flowers as level as a lake—it was, in fact, a lake of faded crimson lying between shores of luxuriant green. The cart-ruts went right down into the flame-flowers, and she thought she could descry where they rose from them on the other side. Evidently the blossoming had taken place since the last cart had passed over, and no doubt many miles intervened between this and the next dwelling-house. Nothing but the thought of necessities that might arise for help on Bart's account made her make the

toilsome passage, knee-deep among the flowers, to see whether, beyond that, the road was passable; but she only found that it was not fit for walkers except at a time of greater drought than the present. The swamp crept round in a ring, so that she discovered herself to be upon what was actually an island. Ann turned back, realising that she was a prisoner.

On her way home again she gathered blood-red tomatoes; and finding a wild apple tree, she added its green fruit to what she already held gathered in the skirt of her gown; starvation at least was not a near enemy.

She had made her investigation calmly, and with a light heart; she felt sure that Bart had grown better and stronger during the day, and that was all that she cared about. She never paused to ask herself why his recovery was not

merely a humane interest but such a satisfying joy. The knowledge of her present remoteness from all distresses of her life as a daughter and sister came to her with a wonderful sense of rest, and opened her mind to the sweet influences of the summer night and its stars as that mind had never been opened before.

She cooked the apples and tomatoes, making quite a good meal for herself. Then she roused Bart, and gave him part of the cooked fruit.

CHAPTER XV.

THE darkness closed in about eight o'clock. Ann sat on the doorstep watching the lights in the sky shine out one by one. Last night had been the only night which had ever possessed terrors for her, and now that she believed her father to be still alive she thought no longer with any horror of his apparition. She wondered where he was wandering, but her heart hardened towards him. She rested and dosed by turns upon the doorstep until about midnight. Then in the darkness she heard a voice from the bracken couch that assured her that Bart's mind had come back to him again.

"Who is there?" he asked.

"I am going to give you

something to eat," she said, letting her voice speak her name.

"Is it very dark?" he asked, "or am I blind?"

"You can see right enough, Bart," she said gently; "you can watch me kindle the fire."

She left the door of the stove open while the spruce twigs were crackling, and in the red, uncertain, dancing light he caught glimpses of the room in which he was, and of her figure, but the fire died down very quickly again.

"I was thinking, Ann," he said slowly, "that it was a pity for Christa to be kept from dancing. She is young and light on her feet. God must have made her to dance."

"Christa's well enough without it," said Ann, a little shortly.

She thought more coldly of Christa since she had come up to a higher level herself.

"Well, I only meant about Christa that I think I made a mistake," said Bart slowly.

"How a mistake?" she asked.

It was a very hard question to answer. A moment before and he thought he had seen what the mistake was and how to speak, but when he tried, all that manifold difficulty of applying that which is eternal to that which is temporal came between his thought and its expression.

He could not know clearly wherein his difficulty lay; no one had taught him about the Pantheism which obliterates moral distinctions, or told him of the subjective ideal which sweeps aside material delight. He only felt after the realities expressed by these phrases, and dimly perceived that truth lies midway between them, and that truth is the mind of God, and can only be lived, not spoken. For a while he lay there in the darkness, trying

to think how he could tell Ann that to his eyes all things had become new; after a little while he did try to tell her, and although the words were lame, and apparently contradictory to much that they both knew was also true, still some small measure of his meaning passed into her mind.

"God is different from what I ever thought," he said; "He isn't in some things and not in others; it's wicked to live so as to make people think that, for they think they can get outside of Him, and then they don't mind Him at all."

"How do you know it?" she asked curiously.

"I saw it. Perhaps God showed me because I was so hard up. It's God's truth, Ann, that I am saying."

The room was quite dark again now; the chirping of the crickets outside thrilled through and through it, as if

there were no walls there but only the darkness and the chirping. Ann sat upon a wooden chair by the stove.

She considered for a minute, and then she said, with the first touch of repentance in her heart: "Well, I reckon God ain't in me, any way. There isn't much of God in me that I can see."

"I'll tell you how it is if I can." Toyner's voice had a strange rest and calm in it. He spoke as a man who looked at some inward source of peace, trying to describe it. "Supposing you had a child, you wouldn't care anything about him at all if you could just work him by wires so that he couldn't do anything but just what you liked; and yet the more you cared about him, the more it would hurt you dreadfully if he didn't do the things that you knew were good for him, and love you and talk to you too. Well now, suppose one day, when

he was a little fellow, say, he wanted to touch something hot, and you told him not to. Well, if he gave it up, you'd make it easier for him to be good next time; but suppose he went on determined to have his own way, can't you think of yourself taking hold of his hand and just helping him to reach up and touch the hot thing? I tell you, if you did that it would mean that you cared a great sight more about him than if you just slapped him and put it out of his reach; and yet, you see, you'd be helping him to do the wrong thing just because you wanted to take the naughtiness out of his heart, not because you were a devil that wanted him to be naughty. Well, you see, between us and our children" (Toyner was talking as men do who get hold of truth, not as an individual, but as mankind) "it's not the same as between God and us. They have our life

in them, but they're outside us and we're outside them, and so we get into the way, when we want them to be good, of giving them a punishment that's outside the harm they've done, and trying to put the harm they are going to do outside of their reach; and when they do the right thing, half the time we don't help them to do it again. But that isn't God's way. Nothing is ever outside of Him; and what happens after we have done a thing is just what must happen, nothing more and nothing less, so that we can never hope to escape the good or the evil of what we have done; for the way things must happen is just God's character that never changes. You see the reason we can choose between right and wrong when a tree can't, or a beast, is just because God's power of choice is in us and not in them. So we use His power, and when we use it

right and think about pleasing Him—for, you see, we know He can be pleased, for our minds are just bits of His mind (as far as we know anything about Him, but of course we only know a very little)—He puts a tremendous lot of strength into us, so that we can go on doing right next time. Of course it's a low sort of right when we don't think about Him, for that's the most of what He wants us to do; but I tell you" (a little personal fire and energy here broke the calm of the recital), "I tell you, when I do look up to God and say, '*Now I am going to do this for Your sake and because You are in me and will do it*,' I tell you, there's *tremendous power* given us. *That's the law that makes the value of religion*; I know it by the way I gave up drinking. But now, look here; most of the time we don't use God's will, that He lends us, to do what's right; well, then He doesn't

slap us and put the harm out of our reach. He does just what the mother does when she takes the child's hand and puts it against the hot thing, and the burn hurts her as much as it hurts the child; but He is not weak like we are to do it only once in a way. I tell you, Ann, every time you do a wrong thing God is with you; that is what I saw when I was hard up and God showed me how things really were. Now, look here, there isn't any end to it that we can see here; it's an awful lot of help we get to do the wrong thing if that's the thing we choose to do. It gets easier and easier, and at first there's a lot of pleasure to it, but by-and-by it gets more and more dreadful, and then comes death, and that's the end here. But God does not change because we die, and wherever we go He is with us and gives us energy to do just what we choose to

do. It's hell before we die when we live that way, and it's hell after, for ages and ages and worlds and worlds perhaps, just until the hell-fire of sin has burned the wrong way of choosing out of us. But remember, God never leaves us whatever we do; there's nothing we feel that He doesn't feel with us; we must all come in the end to being like Himself, and there's always open the short simple way of choosing His help to do right, instead of the long, long way through hell. But I tell you, Ann, whether you're good or whether you're wicked, God is in you and you are in Him. If He left you, you would neither be good nor wicked, you would stop being; but He loves you in a bigger, closer way than you can think of loving anybody; and if you choose to go round the longest way you can, through the hell-fire of sin on earth and all the other

worlds, He will suffer it all with you, and bring you in the end to be like Himself."

The calm voice was sustained in physical strength by the strength of the new faith.

Ann's reply followed on the track of thoughts that had occurred to her. "Well now, there's that awful low girl, Nelly Bowes. She's drunk all the time, and she's got an awful disease. She's as bad as bad can be, and so is the man she lives with; and that little child of hers was born a hard-minded, sickly little beast." Her words had a touch of triumphant opposition as she brought them out slowly. "It's a mean, horrid shame for the child to be born like that. It wasn't its fault. Do you mean to say God is with them?"

"It's a long sight easier to believe that than that He just let them go to the devil! I tell you it's an awful wicked thing

to teach people that God can save them and doesn't. God is saving those two and the child just by the hell they've brought on themselves and it; and He's in hell with them, and He'll bring them out to something grander than we can think about. They could come to it without giving Him all that agony and themselves too; but if they won't, He'll go through it with them rather than turn them into puppets that He could pull by wires. And as to the child, I can't see it quite clear; but I see this much that I know is true: it's God's character to have things so that a good man has a child with a nice clean soul, and it's just by the same way of things that the other happens too. It's the working out of the bad man's salvation to see his child worse than himself, and it's the working out of the child's salvation to have his bad soul in a bad

body. Look you, can't you think that in the ages after death the saving of the soul of that child may be the one thing to make that man and woman divine? They'll never, never get rid of their child, and the child will come quicker to the light through the blackness he is born to than if, having the bad soul that he has, God was to set him in heaven. But, look you, Ann, there isn't a day or an hour that God is not asking them to choose the better and the quicker way, and there isn't a day or an hour that He isn't asking you and me and every one else in the world to do as He does so as to help them to choose it, and live out the sufferings of their life with them till they do."

Ann sat quite still; she had a feeling that if she moved to make any other sound, however slight, than that of speech some spell would be

broken. In the darkness Bart had awakened out of the stupor of his injury; and although Ann could not have expressed it, she felt that his voice came like the speech of a soul that is not a part of the things we see and touch. It was so strange to her that he did not ask her where he was. For a few minutes more at least she did not want to bring the least rustle of material surroundings into their talk. She was still incredulous; it is only a very weak mind that does not take time to grow into a new point of view.

"Bart, was God with father when he tried to kill you and tied you to the tree?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"You can't think of God being less than something else. If God was not in your father, then space is outside God's mind. You can't think that God wanted to save your father

from doing it and didn't, unless you think that the devil was stronger than God. You can't think that you are more loving than God; and if He is so loving, He couldn't let any one do what wasn't just the best thing. I tell you, it's a love that's awful to think of that will go on giving men strength to do wrong until through the ages of hell they get sick of it, rather than make them into machines that would just go when they're wound up and that no one could love."

"Do they know all this in church, Bart?" Ann asked. It had never occurred to her before to test her beliefs by this standard, but now it seemed necessary; she felt after tradition instinctively. The nakedness of Bart's statements seemed to want tradition for a garment.

Bart's words were very simple. "When I was fastened on that log and saw all this,

I saw that Jesus knew it all, and that that was what all His life and dying meant, and that the people that follow Him are learning to know that that was what it meant; it takes them a long, long time, and we can't understand it yet, but as the world goes on it will come clearer. Everybody that knows anything about Him says all this in church, only they don't quite understand it. There's many churches, Ann, where the people all get up and say out loud, 'He descended into hell.' I don't know much, for I've only read the Bible for one year; but if you think of all that Jesus did and all that happened to Him, you will see what I mean. People have made little of it by saying it was a miracle and happened just once, but He knew better. He said that God had been doing it always, and that He did nothing but what He saw God doing, and that when men

saw Him they would know that God was like that always. Haven't I just been telling you that God bears our sins and carries our sorrows with us until we become blessed because we are holy? We can always choose to be that, but He will never *make* us choose. Jesus never *made* anybody do anything, and, Ann, if there are things in the Bible that we don't understand to mean that, it is because they are a parable, and a parable, Ann, is putting something people can't understand in pictures that they can look at and look at, and always learn something every time they look, till at last they understand what is meant. People have always learned just as much from the Bible as they can take in, and made mistakes about the rest; but it is God's character to make us learn even by mistakes."

Ann's interest began to waver. They were silent

awhile, and then, "Bart, do you know where you are?" she asked.

"I don't seem to care much where I am, as long as you are here." There was a touch of shyness in the tone of the last words that made all that he had said before human to her.

"If it hadn't been that I thought it was father, I'd have taken you home." She told him how she had brought him. "If it had been a boat," she said, "I'd have found out who it was before we got here, but the canoe was too narrow."

CHAPTER XVI.

Ann dosed where she sat. Toyner slept again. At length they were both aware that the level light of the sun was in the room.

Ann sat up, looking at the door intently. Then her eyes moved as if following some one across the room.

"What is it?" asked Toyner.

Ann started up with one swift look of agonised entreaty, and then it seemed that what she had seen vanished, for she turned to Bart trembling, unable to speak at first, sobs struggling with her breath.

"It was father—I saw him come to the door and come in. He's dead now."

"What did he look like?" Toyner's voice was very quiet.

"He looked as if he was

dead, but as if he was mad too—his body as if it was dead, and himself wild and mad and burning inside of it." She was crouching on the floor, shaken with the sobs of a new and overwhelming pity. "O Bart! I never cared—cared anything for him before—except to have him comfortable and decent; but if I thought he was going to be—like that—now I think I would die to save him if I could."

"Would you die to save him? So would God; and you can't believe in God at all unless you know that He does what He wants to do. And God does it; dies in him, and is in him now; and He will save him."

Bart's eyes were full of peace.

"Can't you trust God, Ann? When He is suffering so much for love of each of us? He could make us into good machines, but He won't. Can't

you begin to do what He is doing for yourself and other people? Ann, if He suffers in your father and in you, He is glad when you are glad. Try to be glad always in His love and in the glory of it."

Ann's mind had reverted again to the traditions of which she knew so little. "I don't want to go to heaven," she said, "if father is in some place looking like he did just now."

"Heaven" (Bart repeated the word curiously), "heaven is inside you when you grow to be like God; and through all ages and worlds heaven will be to do as He does, to suffer with those that are suffering, and to die with those that are dying. But remember, Ann, too, it means to rejoice with those who are rejoicing; and joy is greater than pain and heaviness. And heaven means always to be in peace and strength and delight, because it is along the line

of God's will where His joy flows."

Ann rose and ran out of the house. To be in the sunshine and among the wild sunflowers was more to her just then than any wisdom. The wave of pity that had gone over her soul had ebbed in a feeling of exhaustion. Her body wanted warmth and heat. She felt that she wanted *only* that. After she had sat for an hour near the bank of the rippling stream, and all her veins were warmed through and through with the sunlight, the apparition of her father seemed like a dream. She had seen him thus once in life, and supposed him a spirit. She was ready to suppose what she had now seen to be a repetition of that last meeting, coming before she was well roused from her sleep. She took comfort because her pulses ran full and quiet once more. She thought of her love to Bart, and was

content. As to all that Bart had said—ah well! something she had gathered from it, which was a seed in her mind, lay quiet now.

At length Toyner found strength to walk feebly, and sat down on the doorstep, where he could see Ann. It was his first conscious look upon this remote autumn bower, and he never forgot its joy. The eyes of men who have just arisen from the dim region that lies near death are often curiously full of unreasoning pleasure. Within himself Toyner called the place the Garden of Eden.

"If only I had not brought you here!" said Ann. "If only I had not left the canoe untied!"

For answer Bart looked around upon the trees and flowers and upon her with happy eyes that had no hint of past or future in them. Something of the secret of all peace—the *Eternal Now*—

remained with him as long as the weakness of this injury remained.

"Don't fret, Ann" (with a smile).

"I'm afraid for you; you look awful ill, and ought to have a doctor."

He had it in his mind to tell her that he was all right and desired only what he had; but, in the dreamy reflective mood that still held him, what he said was:

"If all the trouble in earth and heaven and hell were put together, Ann, it would be just like clouds passing before the sun of joy. The clouds are never at an end, but each one passes and melts away. Ann! sorrow and joy are like the clouds and the sun."

It is never destined that man should remain long in Eden. About noon that day Ann heard a shout from the direction of the lake outside among the dead trees; the shout was repeated yet nearer,

and in a minute or two she recognised the voice and heard the sound of oars splashing up the narrow channel made by the running creek. The thought of this deliverance had not occurred to her; yet when she recognised the voice it seemed to her natural enough that David Brown should have divined where his canoe might have been brought. She stood waiting while his boat came up the creek. The young athlete sprang from it, question and reproach in his handsome young face. She found no difficulty then in telling him just what she had done, and why. She felt herself suddenly freed from all that life of frequent deception which she had so long practised. She had no desire to dupe any man now into doing any service. Something in the stress of the last days, in her new reverence for Bart, had wrought a change in the relative value she set on truth

and the gain of untruth. She held up her head with a gesture of new dignity as she told David that she had sought her father and found Bart.

"Father has half killed him, and now it hurts me to see him ill. Bart is a good man. O David, I tell you there is no one in the world I mind about so much as Bart. Could you take him in your boat now to the hospital at The Mills? He would have done as much for you, and more, if you had got hurt in that way."

So David took the man Ann loved to the hospital at The Mills. He did it willingly if he did it ruefully. Ann went home, as she had come, in the canoe, except that she had gone out in the dead of night and she went home in broad daylight.

No one blamed Ann when they knew she had gone out to help her father; no one

smiled or sneered when they found that she had succeeded in saving Toyner's life.

A few days passed, and poor Markham was found drowned in a forest pool. They brought him home and buried him decently at Fentown for his daughter's sake.

Toyner lay ill for weeks in the little wooden hospital at The Mills.

CHAPTER XVII.

When Toyner was well he came home again. His mind was still animated with the conception of God as suffering in the human struggle, but as absolute Lord of that struggle, and the consequent belief that nothing but obedience to the lower motive can be called evil. The new view of truth his vision had given him had become too really a part of his mind to be overthrown. It was no doubt a growth from the long years of desultory browsing upon popular science and the one year that had been so entirely devoted to the story of the gospel and to prayer. He could not doubt his new creed; but no sooner had he left the hospital walls than that burden came upon him of which the

greatest stress is this, that in trying to fit new light to common use we are apt to lose the clearer vision of the light itself.

In Toyner's former religious experience he had been much upheld by the knowledge that he was walking in step with a vast army of Christians. Now he no longer believed himself in the ways of exclusive thought and practices in which the best men he knew were walking. The only religious thinkers with whom he had come in contact gave up a large class of human activities and the majority of human souls to the almost exclusive dominion of the devil. As far as Toyner knew he was alone in the world with his new idea. He had none of that vanity and self-confidence which would have made it easy for him to hold to it. It did not appear to him reasonable that he could be right and these others wrong. He did not

know that no man can think alone, that by some strange necessity of thought he could only think what other men were then thinking. He felt homesick, sick for the support of those faithful ones which he had been wont to see in imagination with him: their conscious communion with God was the only good life, the life which he must seek to attain and from which he feared above all things to fall short; and that being so, it would have been easier, far easier, to call his new belief folly, heresy, nay, blasphemy if that were needful, and to repent of it, if he could have done so. He could not, do what he would; he saw his vision to be true.

The thing had grown with his growth; he believed that a voice from heaven had spoken it. Is not this the history of all revelation?

When I say that Toyner could not doubt his new

conception of God and of the human struggle, I mean that he could not in sincerest thought hold the contrary to be true. I do not mean to say that daily and hourly, when about his common avocations, his new inspiration did not seem a mere will-o'-the-wisp of the mind. It took months and years to bring it into any accustomed relation to every-day matters of thought and act; and it is this habitual adjustment of our inward belief to our outward environment that makes any creed *appear* to be incontrovertible.

Oh the loneliness of it, to have a creed that no companion has! The sheer sorrow of being compelled by the law of his mind to believe concerning God what he did not know that any other man believed time and time again obscured Bart Toyner's vision of the divine.

The power of the miracle wrought at his conversion

was gone ; he had been taught that the miraculous power was only to be with him as long as he yielded implicit obedience, but that implied a clear-cut knowledge of right from wrong which Toyner did not now possess ; many of the old rules clashed with that one large new rule which had come to him—that any way of life was wicked which made it appear that God was in some provinces of life and not in others. "Whatever is not of faith is sin" ; but while an old and a new faith are warring in a man's soul the definition fails : many a righteous act is born of doubt, not faith. This was one reason why Toyner no longer possessed all-conquering strength. Another reason there was which acted as powerfully to rob him—the soul-bewildering difficulty of believing that the God of physical law can also be the God of promise, that He that is within us and beneath us

can also be above us with power to lift us up.

Without a firm grip on this supernatural upholding power Toyner was a man with a diseased craving for intoxicants. He fled from them as a man flies from deadly infection; but with all the help that total abstinence and the absence of temptation can give he failed in the battle. A few weeks after he had returned to Fentown he was brought into his mother's house one morning dead drunk. The mother, whose heart had revived within her a little during the last year, now sank again into her previous dejection. Her friends said to her that they had always known how it would be in the case of so sudden a reformation. When Toyner woke up his humiliation was terrible; he bore it as he had borne all the rest of his pain and shame, silently enough. No one but Ann Markham even guessed the agony that he endured,

and she had not the chance to give a kindly look, for at this time Toyner, unable to trust himself with himself, was afraid to look upon Ann lest he should smirch her life.

Again Toyner set his feet sternly in the way of sobriety. Ah! how he prayed, beseeching that God, who had revealed Himself to be greater and nobler than had before been known, would not because of that show Himself to be less powerful towards those that fear Him. It is the prayer of faith, not the prayer of agonised entreaty, that takes hold of strength. Toyner failed again and again. There was a vast difference now between this and his former life of failure, for now he never despaired, but took up the struggle each time just where he had laid it down, and moreover the intervals of sobriety were long, and the fits of drunkenness short and few; but there were not many

besides Ann who noticed this difference. And as for Toyner, the shame and misery of failure so filled his horizon that he could not see the favourable contrast—shame and misery, but never despair; that one word had gone out of his life.

One day a visitor came hurrying down the street to Toyner's home. The stranger had the face of a saint, and the hasty feet of those who are conscious that they bear tidings of great joy. It was Toyner's friend, the preacher. Bart had often written to him, and he to his convert. Of late the letters had been fraught with pain to both, but this was the first time that the preacher had found himself able to come a long journey since he had heard of Toyner's fall. He came, his heart big with the prayer of faith that what he had done once he might be permitted to do again—lead this man once more into the humble path of a time-honoured

creed and certain self-conquest. To the preacher the two were one and indivisible.

When this life is passed away, shall we see that our prayers for others have been answered most lavishly by the very contradiction of what we have desired ?

The visit was well timed. Bart Toyner's father lay dying; and in spite of that, or rather in consequence of nights of watching and the necessary handling of stimulants, Bart sat in his own room, only just returned to soberness after a drunken night. With face buried in his hands, and a heart that was breaking with sorrow, Bart was sitting alone; and then the preacher came in.

The preacher sat beside him, and put his arm around him. The preacher was a man whose embrace no man could shrink from, for the physical part of him was as nothing compared with the love and strength of its animating soul.

"Our Lord sends a message to you: 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'" The preacher spoke with quiet strength. "*You* know, dear brother, that this word of His is certainly true."

"Yes, yes, I know it. By the hour in which I first saw you I know it; but I cannot take hold of it again in the same way. My faith wavers."

"Your faith wavers?" The preacher spoke questioningly. "My brother, faith in itself is nothing; it is only the hand that takes; it is the Saviour in whom we believe who has the power. You have turned away from Him. It is not that your faith wavers, but that you are walking straight forward on the road of infidelity, and on that path you will never find a God to help, but only a devil to devour."

Toyner shivered even within the clasp of the encircling arm. "I had tried to tell you in

writing that the Saviour you follow is more to me—far more, not less."

"In what way?" The preacher's voice was full of sympathy; but here, and for the first time, Bart felt it was an unconscious trick. Sympathy was assumed to help him to speak. The preacher could conceive of no divine object of love that was not limited to the pattern he had learned to dwell upon.

"I am not good at words," Toyner spoke humbly. "I took a long time to write to you; I said it better than I could now, that God is far more because He is a faithful Creator, responsible for us always, whatever we do, to bring us to good. Now I do not need to keep dividing things and people and thoughts into His and not-His. That was what it came to before. You may say it didn't, but it did. And all we know about Jesus—don't you see" (Bart

raised his face with piteous, hunted look)—" don't you see that what His life and death meant was—just what I have told you? God doesn't hold back His robe, telling people what they ought to do, and then judge them. He does not shrink from taking sin on Himself to bring them through death to life. Doesn't your book say so again and again and again?"

"God cannot sin!" cried the preacher, with the warmth of holy indignation.

Toyner became calm with a momentary contempt of the other's lack of understanding. "That goes without saying, or He would not be God."

"But that is what you have said in your letters."

There was silence in the room. The misery of his loneliness took hold of Toyner till it almost felt like despair. Who was he, unlearned, very sinful, even now shaken with the palsy of recent excess—

who was he to bandy words with a holy man? All words that came from his own lips that hour seemed to him horribly profane. The new idea that possessed him was what he lived by, and yet alone with it he did not gather strength from it to walk upright.

"The father tempted the prodigal," he said, "when he gave him the substance to waste with sinners. Did the father sin? The time had come when nothing but temptation—yes, and sin too—could save. Most things, sir, that you hold about God I can hold too. There are bad men, powerful and seducing men, in the world; there may easily be unseen devils. There is hell on earth, and I don't doubt but that there's the awfulest, longest depth of the same kind of hell beyond. There's heaven on earth, and all the love and pain of love we have tell us there's heaven beyond, un-

speakable and eternal; but, sir, when you come to limit God—to say, here the responsibility of the faithful God stops, here man's self-destruction begins—I can't believe that. He must be responsible, not only for starting us with freedom, but responsible for the use we make of it and for all the consequence. When you say of the infinite God that hell and the devils are something outside of Him—I can't think that. The devils must live and move and have their being in Him. When you say the holy God ever said to spirit He had created, 'Depart from Me' (except in a parable meaning that as long as a spirit chose evil it would not be conscious of God's nearness), I tell you, sir, by all He has taught me out of the Bible you gave me, I don't believe it. We've studied the Bible so much now that we know that holiness is just love—the

sort of love that holds holy hatred and every other good feeling within itself. We know that love can't fail and cast out the thing it loves. When we know a law, we know the way it must work. If the Bible seems to say the big law it teaches doesn't work out true, it must be like what is said of the six days of creation, something that came as near as it could to what people would understand, but that needs a new explanation."

The young preacher had withdrawn his encircling arm. He sat looking very stern and sad.

"When you begin to doubt God's word, you will soon doubt that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that seek Him."

"Sir, it seems to me that it's doubting the incarnate Word to believe what you do, because the main plain drift of all He was and did is contradicted by some few things

men supposed Him to mean because they thought them. But it's not that I would set myself up to know about doctrines, if it wasn't that this doctrine had driven me to stop believing and stop caring to do right. I can't just explain it clearly, but when I came to Him the way you told me, and thought the way you told me, I just went on and did it and was blessed and happy in the love of God as I never could have dreamed of; but all the time there was a something—I didn't know exactly what—that I couldn't bring my mind to; so I just left it. But when I got tempted, and prayed and prayed, then it came on me all of a sudden that I didn't want a God who had to do with such a little part of life as that. You see it had been simmering in my mind all the days that I stopped doing the things you told me were wrong and yet went on keeping among the publicans and

sinners because He did. If I'd just stayed with the church-goers, maybe I wouldn't have felt it; but to think that I couldn't take a hand in an innocent game o' cards, or dance with the girls that hadn't had another bit of amusement—all that wasn't very important, but that sort of thing began it. And then to think that God was in me and not in them! I began, as I went down the street, wondering who had God in his heart and who hadn't, that I might know who to trust and who to try to do good to. And then, most of all, there was all my books that I liked so much. I didn't read them any more, for when I thought that God had set every word in the Bible quite true and left all the other books to be true or not just as it happened, I couldn't think to look at any book but the Bible; for one's greedy of knowing how things really are—that's what one

reads for. So you see it was all in my mind God did things differently one time and another, like making one book and not the others, and only such a small part of things was His; and then when the temptation came, you see, if I'd thought God was in Markham and the girls I could have done my duty and let Him take care of them; but it was because I'd no cause to think that, and believed that He'd let them go, that I couldn't let them go. I felt that I'd rather give up the sort of a God I thought on and look after them a bit. It wasn't that I thought it out clear at the time; but that was how it came about, and I was ready to kick religion over. And, sir, if God hadn't taught me that when I went down to hell He was there, I don't think I d want to be religious again; but now I do want it with all my might and main, and I'll never let go of it, just as I know He won't let go of

me—no, not if some of these days they have to shovel me into a drunkard's grave; but I believe that God's got the same strength for me just as He had when you converted me." Toyner looked round him despairingly as a man might look for something that is inexplicably lost. "I can't think how it is, but I can't get hold of His strength."

The preacher meditated. It had already been given to him to pray with great persistency and faith for this backslider, and he had come sure of bringing with him adequate help; but now his hope was less. In a moment he threw himself upon his knees and prayed aloud: "Heavenly Father, open the heart of Thine erring child to see that it was the craft and subtlety of the devil that devised for him a temptation he could not resist,—none other but the devil could have been so subtle; and show him that this same

devil, clothed as an angel of light, has feigned Thy voice and whispered in his ear, and that until he returns to the simple faith as it is in the gospel Thou *canst* not help him as of old."

"Stop!" (huskily). "I have not let go of His faith. His faith was in the Father of sinners."

Then the preacher strove in words to show him the greatness of his error, and why he could not hold to it and live in the victory which faith gives. It was no narrow or weak view that the preacher took of the universe and God's scheme for its salvation; for he too lived at a time when men were learning more of the love of God, and he too had spoken with God. The hard outline of his creed had grown luminous, fringed with the divine light from beyond, as the bars of prison windows grow dazzling and fade when the prisoner looks at the sun.

All that the preacher said was wise and strong, and the only reason he failed to convince was that Toyner felt that the thought in which his own storm-tossed soul had anchored was a little wiser and stronger —only a little, for there was not a great difference between them, after all.

"I take in all that you say, sir; but you see I can't help feeling sure that it's true that God is living with us as much and as true when we're in the worst sort of sin, and the greater sin that it brings—for the punishment of sin is more and more sin—and being sure, I know that everything else that is true will come to fit in with it, though I may not be able rightly to put it in now, and what won't come to fit in with it can't be true."

The preacher perceived that the evil which he had set himself to slay was giantlike in strength. He chose him smooth stones for his sling.

His heart was growing heavy with fear of failure, his spirit within him still raised its face heavenward in unceasing prayer. He began to tell the history of God's ways with man from the first. He spoke of Abraham. He urged that the great strength had always come to men who had trusted God's word against reason and against sight. And he saw then that for the first time Toyner raised up his head and seemed stirred with a reviving strength.

The preacher paused, hoping to hear some encouraging word in correspondence to the gesture, but none came.

Then he spoke of Moses and of Joshua, for he was following the tale of God's rejection of sinful nations.

Toyner answered now. His eye was clearer, his hand steadier. "I have read there's many that say that God could not have told His people to slay whole nations, men,

women, and children. I think it's the shallowest thing that was ever said. I don't know about His *telling people* to do it—that may be a poem; but that He gave it to them to do, that He gives it to winds and floods and fires and plagues to do, time and time and again, is as certain as that if there's a God He must have things His way or He isn't God. But I don't believe that in this world, or in the next, He ever left man, woman, or child, but lived with each one all through the sin and the destruction. And, sir, I take it that men couldn't see that until at last there came One who looked into God's heart and saw the truth, and He wanted to tell it, but there were no words, so though He had power in Him to be King over the whole earth, He chose instead to be the companion of sinners, and to go down into all the depths of pain and shame and death and hell. And He said

His Father had been doing it always, and He did it to show forth the Father. That is what it means. I am sure that is what it means."

The preacher was surprised to see the transformation that was going on in the man before him. That wonderful law which gives to some centre of energy in the brain the control of bodily strength, if but the right relationship between mind and body can be established, was again working, although in a lesser degree than formerly, to restore this man before his eyes. Bart, who had appeared shrunken, trembling, and watery-eyed, was pulling himself together with some strength that he had got from somewhere, and was standing up again ready to play a man's part. The preacher did not understand why. There seemed to him to have been nothing but failure in the interview. He made one more effort; he put

the last stone in his sling. Toyner had just spoken of the sacrifice of Calvary, and to the preacher it seemed that he set it at naught, because he was claiming salvation for those who mocked as well as for those who believe.

"Think of it," he said; "you make wrong but an inferior kind of right. You take away the reason for the one great Sacrifice, and in this you are slighting Him who suffered for you."

Then he made, with all the force and eloquence he could, the personal appeal of the Christ whom he felt to be slighted.

"You have spoken of the sufferings of lost and wretched men," he went on; "think of His sufferings! You have spoken of your loneliness; think of His loneliness!"

Then suddenly Bart Toyner made a gesture as a slave might who casts off the chains of bondage. The appeal to

which he was listening was not for him, but for some man whom the preacher's imagination had drawn in his place, who did not appropriate the great Sacrifice and seek to live in its power. He did not now seek to explain again that the death of Christ was to him as an altar, the point in human thought where always the fire of the divine Life descends upon the soul self-offered in like sacrifice. He had tried to explain this; now he tried no more, but he held out his hands with a sign of joy and recovered strength.

"You came to help me; you have prayed for me; you have helped me; you have been given something to say. Listen: you have told me of Abraham; he was called to go out alone, quite alone. Now you have spoken to me of Another who was alone." Toyner was incoherent. "That was why *He* bore it, that we might know that it was

possible to have faith all alone because He had it. It is easy to believe in God holding us up when others do, but awfully hard all alone. He knew that, He warned them to keep together; but all the same He lived out His prayers alone."

Toyner looked at the preacher, love and reverence in his eyes. "You saved me once," he said; "you have saved me again."

But the preacher went home very sorrowful, for he did not believe that Bart Toyner was saved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The spiritual strength that proceeds from every holy man had again flowed in life-giving stream from the preacher to Bart Toyner. The help was adequate. Toyner never became intoxicated again.

His father died; and for two years or more the mother, who had lived frugally all her life, still lived frugally, although land and money had been left to her. The mother would not trust her son, and yet gradually she began to realise that it was he who was quietly heaping into her lap all those joys of which she had been so long deprived. At length she died, the happy mother of a son who had won the respect of other men.

It was after that that Toyner wedded Ann Markham.

Then, when he had the power to live a more individual life of enjoyment and effort, it began to be known little by little that these two had committed that sin against society so hard to forgive, the sin of having their own creed and their own thoughts and their own ways.

Toyner was not a preacher. It was not in him to try to change the ideas of those who were doing well with what ideas they had. All that he desired was to live so that it might be known that his God was the God of the whole wide round of human activity, a God who blessed the just and the unjust. Toyner desired to be constantly blessing both the bad and the good with the blessing of love and home which had been given to him. It was inevitable that to carry out such an idea a man must live through many mistakes and much failure. The ideal itself was an offence

to society. We have all heard of such offences and how they have been punished.

One great factor in the refining of Ann's life was her lover's long neglect; for he, in the simple belief that she must know his heart and purpose and that she would not be much benefited by his companionship, left her for those years that passed before he married her wholly ignorant of his constancy. Ann was constant. Had he explained himself she would have been content and taken him more or less at his own valuation, as we all take those who talk about themselves. Having no such explanation to listen to, she watched and pondered all that he did. Before the day came in which he made his shy and hesitating offer of marriage, she had grown to be one with him in hope and desire. Together they made their mistakes and lived down their failure. They had other

troubles too, for the babies lived and died one by one.

There is seen to be a marvellous alchemy in true piety. Mind and sense subject to its process become refined. Where refinement is not the result, we may believe that there is a false note in the devotion, that there is self-seeking in the effort toward God. Toyner's wealth grew with the spread of the town over the land he owned. He had the good taste to spend well the money he devoted to pleasure; yet it was not books or pictures or music, acquired late in life, that gave to him and to his wife the power to grow in harmony with their surroundings. It was the high life of prayer and effort that they lived that made it possible for God—the God of art as truly as the God of prayer—to teach them.

It is not at the best a cultured place, this backwoods town. There was many a slip

in grammar, many a broad uncouth accent, heard daily in Ann's drawing-room; but what mental life the town had came to centre in that room. Gradually reflecting neighbours began to learn that there was a beneficent force other than intellectual at work there.

Young men who needed interest and pleasure, the poor who needed warmth and food, came together to that room, and met there the drunkard in his sober intervals, the gamester when he cared to play for mere pastime; yes, and others, the more evil, were made welcome there. It was not forgotten that Toyner had been a wicked man and that Ann's father had been a murderer.

It was a strange effort this, to increase virtue in the virtuous, not by separation from, but by friendship with, the unrepentant. To Toyner sin was an abhorred thing. It con-

sisted always, yet only, in failure to tread in the footprints of God, as far as it was given to each man to see God's way—in obedience to the lower motive in any moment of the perpetual choice of life. For himself, his life was impassioned with the belief that it was wicked to live as if God was not the God of the whole of what we may know.

I, who have seen it, tell you that the atmosphere of that house was always sweet. There were many young girls who came to it often, and laughed and danced with men who were not righteous, and the girls lived more holy lives than before. I would say this :—do not let any one imitate the method of life which Toyner and his wife practised unless by prayer he can obtain the power of the unseen holiness to work upon the flux of circumstance ; yet do not let those fear to imitate it who have learned the secret of

prayer. It was a strenuous life of prayer and self-denial that these two lived until their race in this phase of things was run.

It is with this abrupt note of personal observation and reflection that the schoolmaster's manuscript ends. He had evidently become one of Toyner's disciples. It is well that we should know what our brothers think, feel with their hearts for an hour, if it may not be for longer.

Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury

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